THE NEW MAYOR

FOUNDED UPON

GEORGE BROADHURST'S

SUCCESSFUL PLAY

THE MAN OF THE HOUR

BENNETT GIVES HORRIGAN A FINAL LESSON IN THE POWER OF MIND OVER MATTER.—Page 198.

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THE MAN OF THE HOUR.

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

WM. A. BRADY

AND

JOS. R. GRISMER.

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THE NEW MAYOR

CHAPTER I.

TWO MEN AND A GIRL.

THE country house of Charles Wainwright, financier, topped the ridge, overlooking the water, in a climax of architectural hideousness and extravagant cost. The grounds of Charles Wainwright, financier, stretched out into countless acres of landscape gardening. The whole estate of Charles Wainwright, financier, eclipsed those of his neighbors in the fashionable suburb, even as the name of Charles Wainwright, financier, eclipsed almost every other in the city world where money ruled as undisputed and absolute monarch.

Even when he turned from the bustle of city and fellow money-builders, and sought for a space the simple life on his $2,500,000 country place, with its modest equipment of forty-one servants, Mr. Wainwright so far carried

into the wilds the atmosphere of business and the burden of other men's wealth as to have a very complete little stockbroker room fitted up adjoining his big library, and to keep a man night and day at his private wire.

Charles Wainwright, financier, was a bachelor. No obese or statuesque wife carried about with her a portable advertisement of his wealth in the shape of fabulously valuable jewels, or made his name renowned in opera box, Newport Casino or Lenox cottage. His only brother had died, years before, leaving a mere beggarly million dollars or so and two children to divide it. These children—Dallas, a strikingly pretty and still more strikingly independent girl of twenty-four; and Perry, a delightfully lazy, lovable lad of twenty-one —lived with their uncle, who managed their affairs, let them go pretty much as they chose, and—as they were more or less ornamental and entertaining and decidedly popular—was rather fond of them.

The trio had passed a pleasant, uneventful month at the big house on the hill early in the summer of 19—, when a day dawned whereon Fate booked a number of decidedly interesting, fateful happenings to occur.

Wainwright himself was up betimes and at work in his library, poring over market re-

ports, cipher telegrams and a dozen other details of deals which his simple life cult did not prevent him from operating at long range. With him was his secretary, Thompson, a pallid, earnest-looking young fellow, whose unobtrusive efficiency had long since won the financier's admiration.

This morning affairs in the financial world had gone more than ordinarily to Mr. Wainwright's liking. Moreover, a paragraph in one of the city papers that had caught his eye had set his lean gray face to twitching with as near an approach to a smile as the great man ever permitted. Altogether, he was in an unwontedly genial mood, and some of his good nature so far expanded as to include his busy secretary.

"Thompson," he remarked, as the last batch of correspondence was cleared away, "you're looking pale. Do I work you too hard?"

"No, indeed, sir," replied the secretary, with a promptitude that had something almost slavish in it.

"Feeling all right?" went on Wainwright. "You need more exercise. Why don't you get out of doors oftener?"

"The work, sir——"

"Get another man to help you with the telegraph part of it, then. I——"

"Thank you, sir. You are very kind indeed. But if it's just the same to you, I'd rather handle it all myself. I hope the work's perfectly satisfactory, sir?"

"Perfectly, Thompson. You're the only employee I have who seems to love work for work's sake. Seen anything of Mr. Gibbs this morning?"

"No, sir. I don't believe he's up yet. Coming by such a late train last night, you know, sir, and——"

"I was up as late as he was and I was at work by eight. But when a man takes his first holiday in six years, as he is doing, I suppose oversleeping is part of the fun. There's a man to pattern yourself after, Thompson! I remember when he started out he hadn't a penny. Nothing but the resolve to get money and then to get more of it. And now look at him. At thirty-five he's the head of one of the busiest brokerage houses in——"

"Good-morning!" broke in a voice from the foot of the broad stairway across the hall. "Sorry to be so late. Do you know how the market is?"

"It's opened even stronger than I hoped," said Wainwright. "Take a look at these despatches and see for yourself. Had your breakfast?"

"Yes, thanks," answered the newcomer, a well-groomed, stockily-built man, lounging into the room with a nod at Thompson, who discreetly withdrew into the adjoining office. "Seems queer to have a whole day away from the office. I hardly know what to do with so much spare time."

"It's the every-day hard work that's put you where you are to-day, Gibbs, and that's interested me in you. For instance, that deal of yours in South Sea Copper——"

"Yet that was the deal the papers all——"

"All denounced you for? What do you care? You were within the law. They've been hammering me for years and attributing all sorts of low motives to me. As long as the law doesn't interfere I'm going to get all I can. So there you are. So is every sane man. As long as it can be done without any fuss or shouting. A mosquito could bite twice as often if only he didn't sing a song about it. By the way, have you seen the papers?"

"No. Anything new?"

"One thing, at least, that ought to interest you. Listen to this: 'The engagement of the niece of a world-celebrated financier to a prominent young broker is about to be announced. The young lady and her brother are orphans, and are not only their famous uncle's wards,

but also the sole heirs to his vast wealth. They are summering at his magnificent country place, where the fortunate broker is said to spend every one of the very few moments left vacant by his daring stock manipulations.' No mistaking that, eh, Gibbs?"

"It—it ought to bring matters to a head, I should think."

"It certainly should," assented Wainwright. "In fact, it's such an audacious master-stroke that I've a notion you may possibly have been at the bottom of it. Now confess. Weren't you?"

"Well, of course I didn't exactly write it. But——"

"Clever boy! Dallas will have to show her hand now or never. She's kept you on the anxious seat too long as it is. That's the reason I asked you up here for the day. She must settle it to-day if I can manage it. She knows how anxious I am for her to accept you."

"But I'm sometimes afraid she doesn't care for me."

"Then make her care. As long as she cares for no one else you can persuade her to believe she adores you."

"How do you know? You're a bachelor."

"Perhaps that's how I know. And she doesn't care for any one else."

"You're sure? There's Bennett, for instance."

"Alwyn Bennett? Why, absurd! She's known him all her life. They're just good friends, nothing more. He's our nearest neighbor here and it's only natural. Besides, he isn't the sort of man she wants. He's an idler. She likes men who have made something of themselves, like yourself, for instance. So make yourself easy on that score. If Bennett loved her, he'd have proposed long ago."

"Not necessarily. He's not a man to get started easily. But once start him and——"

"Then don't start him. Go in and win. What is it, Thompson?"

The secretary entered from the office with a despatch.

"There's an answer, sir," said he. "Here's a blank."

Wainwright read the message, scribbled a few lines and handed the reply to the secretary, who hurried out with it.

"So Thompson is not only a secretary, but a telegraph operator as well," remarked Gibbs, as the clicking of a Morse instrument sounded from the office.

"He's everything," replied Wainwright. "He's a wonder. He heard me say I wished I had a good operator up here whom I could

trust. So without a word to me he goes and learns telegraphy. I've had him nine years now and tested and tempted him fifty ways. But he's as true as steel. The one employee I ever had that I could trust. By the way, the message he just brought me ought to interest you. It tells me Borough Street Railway stock is offered now at 63. I've given orders for your office to take all they can get hold of at that price—quietly, and without making any bids or attracting attention. That'll be the biggest deal of my career if I can carry it through. You understand your part perfectly? To take for yourself 20 per cent. of the deal, handle the whole affair on the floor and not buy any of the stock for your own private account. Stick to that and there's just one thing that can possibly block us."

"You mean the defeat of the present city administration this fall?"

"Just that. And I don't believe it will be beaten. The organization's solid as a rock. They have the police, the office-holders and——"

"But the people at large?"

"The people at large are sheep that like to be driven by the strongest shepherd. If they weren't they'd have broken loose a century ago and run the city and the country to suit them-

selves. Just now Dick Horrigan happens to be the 'shepherd' who can make them go wherever he says."

"Shepherd and 'crook' combined, I should say," commented Gibbs, chuckling at his own feeble joke.

"I wouldn't let a speech like that get back to Horrigan if I were you," returned Wainwright, dryly. "Your career might suffer. Nothing (except, maybe, gratitude) is as bad as humor for spoiling a man's chances in business or politics. A laugh costs more than people think. But, speaking of the election this fall, a reform wave or any change of city administration would smash our Borough Street Railway deal. To offset that, I've joined hands with Horrigan. If I can bring him to see things my way, he shall have cash enough to buy all the honest voters he needs. He's coming here this noon to talk things over with me. Phelan's coming, too."

"Phelan? You mean the Alderman of the Eighth? You'll have a pleasant little gathering. Perhaps you didn't know that Phelan and Horrigan have had a row and——"

"And that's why I'm bringing them together here to-day. I want to patch up their quarrel if I can. I need them both. Phelan's a useful man."

"But Horrigan is boss of the organization. If you have him on your side why do you bother about getting Phelan too?"

"Yes, Horrigan is boss. He's fought his way up by bulldog tactics. He has no diplomacy. Nothing but brute force. Now, Phelan has just as much force in his way, but he's as tricky as a fox, too. I've known him ever since he was Chief of Police. He's a dangerous man. If he's against us he can make trouble. I want him. He's——"

"Judge Newman!" announced the butler.

A whimsical frown crossed Wainwright's face, but cleared into a passably hospitable expression as a little, gray-haired man with a solemn, weak face trotted pompously in on the heels of the butler's announcement.

"Good-morning, Judge," said the host, pleasantly. "You don't know Mr. Gibbs, I think, of Gibbs, Norton & Co.? Judge Newman is my next door neighbor on the left as you come from the station, Gibbs. You must have noticed the place—Queen Anne house, with——"

"Oh, he probably never gave it a glance," put in the Judge. "A mere cottage, that's all. When a man with my meager judicial salary has a social position to keep up and four daughters that aren't married and—Charles, you

can't realize what it means to have four unmarried——"

"No, I cannot," assented Wainwright quickly; "and from present signs I'm not likely to. I hope Mrs. Newman is well?"

The little Judge's face grew doubly important.

"Extremely well, thank you," said he. "A wonderful woman! You've met her, Mr. Gibbs? No? But of course you must have heard—— By the way, Charles, it was she who told me to drop in on you this morning. You see—I—she—Mrs. Newman is most anxious for me to come up for re-election this fall. Mr. Horrigan, to whom I broached the subject, doesn't quite want to have me renominated. I thought perhaps—as a personal favor, to so old a friend—you might say a word to Mr. Horrigan in my behalf."

"Of course, I'll do what little I can. Horrigan will be here to-day. Drop in a little after noon and I'll tell you how my intervention turns out."

"Oh, thank you so much!" cried the Judge, positively wriggling in his delight. "Mrs. Newman will be so pleased. And—by the way, won't you ask Perry why he never comes over to see my daughters? Please ask him if he won't. I'm sure Mrs. Newman would be glad

if he did. Well, till afternoon, then. Good-morning."

"Queer little rat!" observed Gibbs, as the Judge bowed himself out. "Mrs. Newman must be a marvel if all he says is——"

"She is a wonder as a husband-trainer. She tamed him so he doesn't know his soul's his own. A good little man because he's never had a chance to be otherwise. I'll speak to Horrigan about him, though. It's always well to have a friend on the bench. One never can tell when——"

But Gibbs was not listening. His heavy face had lighted with a sudden glow of eagerness. Turning to note the cause, Wainwright saw his niece Dallas descending the stairs. Involuntarily she halted as she reached the threshold and saw Gibbs. Then, her sense of hospitality triumphing over impulse, she came in and greeted her uncle's guest with some show of cordiality.

"Remember, Dallas," said Wainwright, as he prepared to go into his office, "Gibbs is here only for the day. I count on you to make his holiday as pleasant as you can." He glanced covertly at Gibbs, who had strolled to the window. Then the financier lowered his voice and said rapidly:

"Please be nice to Gibbs for my sake, Dallas.

BROKER GIBBS MAKES "RATIONAL LOVE" TO DALLAS.—Page 17.

I do a great deal for you, and I don't often ask anything in return."

He patted her on the shoulder with a gesture meant to be affectionate, and hurried into the adjoining office. Scarcely had the door closed when Gibbs turned from the window, crossed the room to where Dallas stood, and, in his usual direct fashion, asked:

"You saw that——"

"The article in this morning's paper? Yes."

There was no confusion, no embarrassment, neither in the clear, girlish voice nor in the honest, dark eyes that met Gibbs's so calmly. He went on with a shade less confidence:

"It annoys you?"

"Very much indeed."

"You can't feel worse about it than I do, Miss Wainwright. I——"

"You didn't write it yourself, then?"

"I? Of course not! How could you think——"

"I didn't. I just wondered. Please see that the rumor is denied."

"Why should I? You are going to marry me some day, aren't you, Dallas?"

"Have I ever given you reason to think I would?"

"You have let me keep on coming to see you. You have——"

"I have told you that I don't care for you the way you want me to. I have great admiration and respect for you, but that is all. And it is not enough to marry on."

"It is enough for me. If I have your admiration and respect to start on I'll soon make you love me."

"You would be satisfied with so little?"

"Yes. Knowing I could in time win more. You aren't the sort of girl who could marry a man if she didn't respect him—didn't admire him. You——"

"Perhaps I couldn't marry such a man. But perhaps I couldn't help loving him."

"Your chances for happiness would be better with me. Oh, Dallas, you know I love you! You've kept me waiting so long! Is it fair to either of us?"

"I hesitate because I want to be fair to us both. For that reason I must still ask you to wait."

"But I've waited so long! Tell me one thing: Is there any one else that——"

Steps, none too light, clattered down the stairs, and into the library bounded a lad in tennis flannels. He was tall, well set up and good to look at, and seemed always to have stepped directly from a bandbox and to have

had extremely recent acquaintance with much soap and water.

"Hello, Dallas!" he shouted, encompassing his sister in a bear hug. "How soon are——"

"Here's Mr. Gibbs, Perry," Dallas reminded him, as she emerged, somewhat crumpled, from the embrace. "Have you——"

The lad's manner underwent a lightning and frigid change.

"Oh, good-morning!" he grunted, with a curt nod to the visitor; and picking up a paper, turned to the sporting sheet, and became immersed in its contents, oblivious of all else.

"Mr. Gibbs is only spending one day with us," admonished Dallas, trying to soften her young brother's rudeness.

"Hope he'll enjoy it," came in absent tones from the depths of the paper.

Gibbs rose.

"I'm going out for a cigar on the terrace," said he. "I'll join you a little later."

"Perry!" scolded Dallas, as soon as the broker disappeared through the long windows, "how could you treat a guest of uncle's so rudely?"

"I don't like the fellow. And I don't like what I read in the paper to-day about him and you. Gee! what a measly paragraph! It's enough to make a white man want to dash out

his brains with a cigarette. You're going to deny it in time for the retraction to get into to-morrow's papers, aren't you?'"

"I—I'm not quite sure."

"Good Lord!" gasped Perry, slumping down in the nearest chair. "Are you crazy? Say, if you are looking for a real, good, exciting match, why don't you marry a Wall Street Stock Report. It'd be better'n Gibbs. If you marry him you'll only be an 'also ran' with the ticker-tape and the market news. Oh, keep out of it, old girl. You owe something to your intelligent and distinguished little brother. If you've got to commit matrimony, marry some one I like, can't you?"

"I haven't given him a definite answer yet," admitted the girl, a little touched by the real feeling that underlay her brother's flippant words.

"That's good medicine! Confidence restored and the run on brother's emotions is checked. Next time you get the marry bee I have a dandy candidate to suggest for the job."

"Who?" laughed Dallas, amused in spite of herself.

"Alwyn Bennett."

"How silly!"

"Not on your life! Words of wisdom from the young. That's what it is. Go ahead and

marry Bennett. Be a sport and say 'Yes.' Why don't you want to marry him?"

"For any one of a million reasons. First of all, he never asked me to."

"Maybe he's scared to. But if he wasn't stuck on you he wouldn't be hanging around here every day and going everywhere with you the way he does. I'll bet nine dollars he's——"

"Mr. Bennett!" the butler announced.

Brother and sister stared guiltily at each other.

"Speaking of angels——" muttered Perry. But Dallas had already turned to welcome the visitor.

Alwyn Bennett, at first glance, had little to distinguish him from the average good-looking young man about town. But a close observer would have noticed a firmness about the shapely mouth, an honesty and strength of purpose about the eyes, a general air of latent power that lay unawakened beneath the jolly, purposeless exterior. No crisis had yet called forth any special manifestation of this power, and meanwhile Bennett was content to loaf through an existence that thus far had been decidedly pleasant. The only son of a widowed mother who advised and spoiled him; more than comfortably well-off from the great fortune amassed by his dead father; possessed

of a social position unassailable, and equally fortunate in that mysterious quality that spells popularity—all these gifts had saved Alwyn Bennett the trouble of fighting life's battle, or showing what might be within his reach.

"Good old Bennett!" hailed Perry. "We were just talking about you."

"Good!" answered Alwyn. "Anything is better than indifference. What were you saying about me?"

"You tell him, Dallas!" grinned the boy.

"Be quiet!" whispered his sister, flushing with vexation.

"Then I'll tell for myself," went on Perry, gleefully. "I was just asking her——"

Seeing the girl's confusion, Bennett quickly changed the subject by interrupting.

"My mother will be over here in a few minutes, Dallas. She is bringing along a guest of ours, who says you and she were chums at school—Miss Garrison."

"Cynthia Garrison? Oh, I'll be ever so glad to see her again! I——"

"I know who she is," cried Perry, refusing to be snubbed. "They say she's a gorgeous looker. When her kennel was under the hammer, I bought in her two pet Boston terriers, Betty and Prince. Maybe that won't make me solid with her, eh? Well, I guess! All I

ask is a start, and you'll find a whole lot of cripples slower than I'll be. If they're walking over, I might wander out, sort of aimless-like, and happen to meet 'em. Maybe that's a bum idea? Good old me!"

Full of his Macchiavellian scheme, the lad bolted through the long window and was gone.

"Dallas," began Bennett without preamble, "you must surely know why I'm here to-day. You've seen that paragraph in the——"

"I have seen it," she answered, quietly.

Taken aback by her manner, Bennett hesitated an instant, then asked nervously:

"The—the rumor isn't true, Dallas? Tell me it isn't."

"Why shouldn't it be true?" she countered perversely, as though not wholly sorry to witness the new look her words called to his face. The look deepened as Bennett continued:

"You don't love Gibbs? Surely you don't love him?"

"I——"

The French windows swung wide, breaking off her reply.

CHAPTER II.

LOVE AND POLITICS.

ALWYN BENNETT turned sharply toward the window, angry at the interruption. But Perry Wainwright, ushering two ladies in from the veranda, met his scowl with a wink of triumph.

"Not so bad, eh?" called the boy. "Met them as they were turning into the drive. You see——"

"Oh," observed the younger of the two women—a pretty, flower-faced girl who, since her entrance into the room, had been engaged in exchanging delighted greetings with Dallas. "So you came to meet us? You said you just happened——"

"Did I?" asked Perry, in deep amazement. "Well, well! The fact is, I wanted to do something startling in honor of meeting you. So I told my first lie. I——"

"Don't mind him, Cynthia!" laughed Dallas. "He's taken that way quite often."

"Oh, it's his usual pace, then?" queried Miss

THOMPSON OVERHEARS HIS OWN LIFE STORY.—Page 27.

Garrison, innocently. "I thought perhaps he was just warming up."

"And now," pursued Dallas, taking possession of Cynthia, much to Perry's disgust, "tell me all about yourself. Have——"

"There isn't much to tell. But there's going to be. I'm going to work."

"Work? What for?"

"For a living, of course."

"Not really?"

"Yes; isn't it ridiculous?" broke in Mrs. Bennett, a sweet little old lady who now found her first chance to edge in a word amid the general volley of talk. "But Cynthia is set on doing it."

"Why shouldn't I? I haven't a dollar, and there's a theory that one must live."

"But what are you going to do?" asked Dallas.

"I don't know. I have a pretty good education. I shall find something. I—Dallas, I think your brother is giving us a high sign of some sort."

"I am!" declared Perry. "I just wanted to tell you there's a surprise waiting for you. Two surprises. In one kennel. Want to see 'em?"

"What is he talking about?" queried Cyn-

thia, appealing to Dallas for light on the mystery.

"About Betty and Prince Charlie," retorted Perry. "Your two Boston terriers that I bought. Want to see 'em?"

"Oh, the darlings! Of course I do. Where are they?"

"Come along and I'll show you. The darlings, eh? Talk like that makes me wish I was a dog!"

"Don't despair!" suggested Cynthia. "Maybe you'll grow."

Still puzzling vaguely as to the possible meaning of this cryptic utterance, Perry followed Miss Garrison from the room, a grin of satisfied ambition wreathing his tanned face.

"To think of poor little Cynthia having to go to work!" sighed Dallas, looking after them. "One would as soon think of putting a butterfly into harness. Is it true she has no money left?"

"I'm afraid it's only too true," answered Mrs. Bennett. "Her father lost everything in speculating. He was cashier of the Israel Putnam Trust Company and afterward president. He——"

She paused as the office door opened and Thompson, the secretary, came into the room. At sight of Mrs. Bennett he seemed about to

turn back, but changed his purpose, crossed to the table and began to look for some documents he had failed to gather up.

"What was the rest of the story about Mr. Garrison?" asked Dallas, really interested in the older woman's recital.

Thompson's papers slipped through his fingers and went skidding across the polished floor. The others looked around in surprise.

"Excuse me!" muttered the secretary, as he stooped to gather up the documents. "Very awkward! I'm sorry."

He went on arranging the scattered papers in his usual unobtrusive silence, effacing himself from the general talk.

"You were telling me about Cynthia's father," said Dallas.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Bennett, taking up the thread of her tale. "He was looked on as one of the most honorable bankers in the city. And so he was, until his misfortune."

"Misfortune?"

"More misfortune than crime. His wife was a girlhood friend of mine, so perhaps I am prejudiced in his favor. A famous financier—a dear friend of his—induced him to make a very large loan that proved to be a mistake. He went to the financier for advice as to how to recoup the loss. The financier told him of

an investment by which he could get all the money back without any risk, and could make good the loan. Mr. Garrison took his advice, used the bank's funds for the purpose, and—the investment proved worthless. The bank was insolvent. Mr. Garrison shot himself."

"Horrible! Horrible!" murmured Dallas.

"The 'horrible' part of the whole story came out later," said Alwyn Bennett. "It seems the financier had deliberately ruined Mr. Garrison and was on the other side of the deal by which the bank's funds were lost. In other words, he persuaded his friend to put money in what he knew was a losing venture, then took that money himself."

"He did it wilfully," chimed in Mrs. Bennett, "knowing his friend would be ruined and that the bank's money which he lured Mr. Garrison into investing was going to swell his own ill-gotten fortune."

"I did not think any one lived who could do such things," shuddered Dallas. "Poor Cynthia!"

"Cynthia suffered least of all," said Mrs. Bennett. "She was little more than a child at the time. Her mother died of grief, and her brother—a promising, clever young fellow, just entering college—disappeared."

"Deserted Cynthia?"

"Not so bad as that. He probably went away sooner than face his father's disgrace, and began life somewhere far from home. That was nine years ago; yet ever since then he sends Cynthia a little money every month. Not much, but no doubt all he can scrape together above his bare living expenses. She has tried in every way to get in touch with him, but she can't locate him anywhere. There is no clue except that monthly money-order. I never knew him very well. In fact, I only saw him once or twice; but I've heard he was a fine, manly boy. The shock must have been worst of all on him."

"So a man lost his good name and his life, his wife died, his son's life was wrecked, and his daughter impoverished," mused Dallas; "and all that a financier might grow a little richer. I can't believe it!"

A little ashamed of displaying such vehemence in the presence of one of her uncle's dependents, the girl glanced toward the table. But the secretary had gone.

"My husband," prattled Mrs. Bennett, complacently, "always said that the men who rose highest in the money world reached their lofty places over the despoiled bodies of hundreds of victims. Thank God, my boy has no such parental record to look back on! My husband

was one man in a million. The soul of honor, both in business and in private life. You've read of his splendid Civil War record? Then he went into business as a contractor and engineer, and earned a fortune, every dollar of which was honest. That's something to be proud of in these money-loving times."

"What was the name of the financier who ruined Mr. Garrison?" asked Dallas, still haunted by the narrative she had just heard.

"No one knows. It was suppressed at the time. The facts in the written confession left by Mr. Garrison became public property. But, through political influence, the name of the man responsible for the tragedy was suppressed. Here I sit chatting on doleful topics, while those two young people are running all over the place unchaperoned. Excuse me, won't you? and I'll look them up."

She smiled at Alwyn as she left the room, and his answering smile showed how fully he understood and appreciated her motive in leaving him alone with Dallas Wainwright. Perhaps Dallas, too, understood, for she made as though to follow Mrs. Bennett out on the lawn. But Alwyn stepped between her and the window.

"Don't go just yet," he begged. "I've so much to talk over with you. When they came

in we were speaking of that paragraph about Gibbs and yourself. You don't love him, do you, Dallas? Tell me you don't!"

"What right have you to ask me such a question?"

"Only the right that my love for you gives me, dear heart. You must have known I loved you, even though I've never said it before. I love you, Dallas, though till to-day, I think, I never realized how much. Tell me it isn't true that you're going to marry Gibbs."

"Even if it weren't true, I should not marry you, Alwyn."

"Ah!"

The exclamation was wrung unconsciously from his whitening lips. It was as though a pang of physical pain had pierced him.

"I wouldn't marry you," went on Dallas, though more gently, "because you don't really love me."

"I do! I do! With my whole heart, I——"

"Oh, Alwyn!" she exclaimed, with almost mother-like tolerance. "What a child you are! What a mere child! Some one tries to take away from you a plaything you've grown used to having. You never cared especially about the plaything before, but now that you're in danger of losing it you cry out 'Oh, I love it!

I love it!' You'll soon find another toy that'll make you forget——"

"Dallas! You are unfair! You have no right to treat my love for you as if——"

"As if it were a mere whim? Isn't it? Now don't say 'No,' but look me in the eyes and answer one question. If Scott Gibbs hadn't proposed to me—if that paragraph had not appeared in the paper—would you have come here to-day and told me you loved me? No, you know you wouldn't!"

"Don't talk like that, dear!" implored Bennett. "I tell you I love you! More than I ever dreamed a woman could be loved. I love you! I——"

"There's an easy way to prove it, then."

"What way? Anything——"

"By doing something to make me feel proud of you. I don't feel so now. I could not marry a man who loiters his life away—a man who sits idle while others are thronging past him in the upward climb. You are rich, thanks to your father's efforts. What have you done with that wealth? If you've done no harm with it, you've at least put it to no good use. You are young, talented, highly educated. What have you done with your youth, your talents, your education? How have you used them for your own betterment or for your

fellow-men's? What have you to offer me? Money? Social position? I have plenty of both. What else can you offer me? Nothing —absolutely nothing!"

"My love, for one thing. I can offer you that."

"In what is your love better than any other man's? Behind it is there a record of hard work, of self-sacrifice, of achievement—of any of the things that go toward making love strong and enduring and beautiful—to make it a support that a woman can lean on for life? What have you to offer me—or any other woman?"

There was a silence. Yet when Bennett spoke there was a new note in his voice; a ring of awakening strength that impressed Dallas, in spite of herself; that sent a wholly strange thrill through her and set her heart to beating with unwonted quickness.

"You're right," said he. "I have done nothing. I've been content to be a rich man's son. And I've nothing to offer that is worthy your acceptance. But that does not mean I never shall have. And by the grace of God, I shall! You've put things in a new light. I see them as I never did. It isn't a wholly pleasant experience. But it's good for me. There's noth-

ing yet that I'm fitted to do. But I'll find something, never fear. And when I do——"

"Don't say there's nothing you're fit for," protested Dallas. "There's nothing you couldn't accomplish if once you set yourself to it. Why, just think of those speeches you made for Mr. Lorimer last campaign. They were fine. I was so——"

"Oh, those amounted to nothing. I just did it to oblige him. And, besides, it was fun to sway the crowds."

"That's just it. You did it for fun and for a friend. Why not do something in earnest and for yourself? The world is fairly bristling with opportunities for such a man as you. Grasp those opportunities. Won't you?"

"Yes! And when I do—— Is there any hope that you will?"

"I have given Mr. Gibbs no promise. I told him to wait."

"Then my chance is as good as his! From now on I am going to drop the rôle of rich man's son and be something on my own account. If you have faith in me—if you believe in me—if there is a ghost of a chance that you can some day love me——"

"I have faith in you, Alwyn," she answered softly, letting her hand lie passive in his grasp.

Then, withdrawing it witn a pretty gesture of petulance, she added:

"Only I wish it didn't always require a blow to rouse you to action. Did you ever happen to notice that trait in yourself?"

"Why, no. I don't quite understand."

"Then here's an instance that will show you what I mean: In your senior year at Yale, when you were playing halfback on the 'Varsity eleven, I saw my first football game. It was against Princeton. You were the only man on either team I knew. So I watched you from first to last. Little as I understood football, I could see you were playing a clever, hard, conscientious game. But it wasn't a fighting game. Not the sort of game that carries everything before it. Then, in the second half, in one of the scrimmages, I saw a Princeton man strike you. Oh, it was a dastardly, cowardly blow! He struck you when your head was turned away. You saw who it was and you made no appeal to the referee. But in the next scrimmage you broke that man's collarbone and stunned him. He was carried senseless from the field. And you kept on. You had begun to play a fighting game. And it carried you through the Princeton line for the only touchdown of the day. You won the game for Yale. You were the college hero

—*the man of the hour.* But it took a blow to rouse you. Now, do you understand?"

"Yes, I think I do. Perhaps you're right. I certainly remember the blow well enough. Do you happen to know who it was that struck me that day on the football field?"

"No; I knew none of the players except you. Who——"

"It was Gibbs."

"No!"

"I'm not likely to have forgotten. Ask him yourself. He will remember, I fancy. It was a week before he left the infirmary."

"But I can't realize that Mr. Gibbs would do such a thing! It was so cowardly—so——"

"Oh, don't hold it against him. He was excited and——"

"Tell Mr. Phelan I'll see him in the library," called Wainwright from the hall.

"More politics!" exclaimed Dallas. "Come, shall we go out to the tennis court?"

They passed through the open French window as Wainwright and Gibbs entered the library from the opposite door.

"The Alderman's a little behind time," said Wainwright. "He's a character in his way. You'll be interested in meeting him, Gibbs."

"Mr. Phelan!" announced the butler.

"I know my own name, son," remarked a

voice behind him. "You needn't go hollerin' it at me like I was bein' ratified at an East Side meetin'. Mornin', Mr. Wainwright! Maybe it was you he was hollerin' at."

"You're a little late, Alderman," said the financier.

"I always am. Let the other feller do the waitin'. That's my motto, and many a good hour's time I've saved by it. Who's your friend?"

"Mr. Gibbs, of Gibbs & Norton. Mr. Gibbs, this is Alderman Phelan."

"Of the Eighth," amended Phelan. "Only man to carry his ward last election runnin' independent. Pleased to meet you. Yes, sir, I ran independent and I won, as Wainwright here can tell you. Horrigan's out against me this year, and he's got carried away by some fool idea that he can down me next campaign."

"Can he?" asked Gibbs, politely bored.

"Can he?" roared Phelan, his close-clipped hair a-bristle. "Can he? Can Chesty Dick Horrigan down Alderman Jimmy Phelan? Well! Nothin' to it, son. When I'm through with Dick Horrigan he'll have worried himself so thin they'll have to wear glasses to shave him. I'll bury him so deep this fall that they'll never find him till they start diggin' a subway to China."

"You seem pretty confident," observed Gibbs.

"Confident! Why not? Why not, I ask you? Why wouldn't I be confident? Is there a voter in the ward—black, white, yellow or greenhorn—that I can't call by his first name and ask after all the children by name? Is there a voter in the ward that I haven't staked to coal, or outings or bail or booze? Is there? If so, name him to me. Put a name to him. They're my friends twelve months of every year. Not just at election time. Horrigan, indeed! Say, if he starts runnin' any man in my ward he'll have to sight him by a tree to see if he's makin' any progress or not. Horrigan, hey!"

"Come, come, Alderman," interposed Wainwright. "Why don't you and Horrigan smoke the pipe of peace? Why——"

"The only pipe me an' Dick Horrigan will ever come together over will be a yard of lead pipe, an' my fist will be at one end of that an' his thick head at th' other."

"But," remonstrated Wainwright, "he is a strong man. Is it safe to fight him?"

"Why isn't it? He's got to come into the Eighth to lick me, and he'll be about as strong there as a barkeeper's influence with the Prohibition party. Besides, I like a fight. I'm

the original 'Stop, Look and Listen' signal at Trouble Station. I——"

"As a personal favor to me, Alderman," wheedled Mr. Wainwright, in his most persuasive manner, "won't you make a friend of Horrigan?"

"I'd gladly oblige you by makin' a fine, fash'nable, rollickin' funeral of him; but friends—friends!"

"But if I asked him here to meet you, wouldn't you try to be cordial to him?"

"I sure would! As cordial as a bankrupt to a rent collector. He'd be pretty near as welcome as a broken leg!"

"I'm sorry you look at it that way, Alderman, because I've asked him to-day."

"To come here? Quit your joshin'!"

"But he doesn't know he'll meet you."

"An' he'll never find it out. For I'm on my way. I'd sooner meet a p'rade from th' Contagion Hospital."

"Of course, if you're really afraid of him——"

"Afraid of him!" snorted Phelan, coming to a full stop at the door and then returning to the middle of the room. "Afraid of Dick Horrigan! Show me the man I'm afraid to meet, and I'll meet him with pleasure just to show you it's a lie. As for——"

"Mr. Horrigan!" came the butler's announcement from the threshold.

The man who followed the announcement was one who carried in his bearing the chief reasons for his success. Tall, stout, square of jaw, square of brow, hard of mouth, he seemed to dominate his very surroundings and to exhale a rough forcefulness that carried all before it. His physiognomy was essentially that of the born fighter, as well as leader—the man that neither gives nor asks quarter. From the days when, as a ferry-ticket seller, he had laid the foundations of his later fortunes by "knocking down fares"—up through his varied career as policeman, contractor, politician and boss—he had fought his way ever to the front by that same force, backed by a bulldog pluck, a genius for organization and a mentality wholly devoid of scruple and conscience.

It could not be said of Richard Horrigan that his morals were bad. He simply had no morals at all. By contact with men of higher culture than his own he had lost his early incorrectness and vulgarity of speech. His domineering roughness of manner he had no wish to lose. It was by far too valuable an asset.

"Good-morning, Mr. Wainwright," began Horrigan, with a breezy familiarity, as he strode into the library, quite unabashed at find-

ing himself in the presence of the dreaded Finance King; "I'm a bit ahead of time, but——"

He stopped short with a grunt of rage. His eye had fallen on Phelan. Bristling like a plucky terrier at the onset of a mastiff, the Alderman stood his ground, giving the Boss glare for glare.

And so, for a moment, the enemies faced each other.

CHAPTER III.

A SURPRISE.

HORRIGAN was first to break the tense silence.

"What's this here for?" he growled, indicating Phelan with a contemptuous jerk of the head and addressing no one in particular.

"Ask your friend Wainwright," grunted Phelan, with equal roughness.

"I—you see," began Wainwright, conciliatingly—"I didn't like to see two such first-rate chaps at odds with each other, so I wanted to bring you together here to——"

"Oh, you did, did you?" sneered Horrigan; "and what did Phelan say to that little plan?"

"I said," snapped Phelan, before his host could reply—"I said I'd see you in —— first!"

"Same here, twice over!" said Horrigan.

"But," interposed Wainwright, coaxingly, "is there no way——"

"No!" retorted Horrigan, his deep voice rumbling far down in his throat; "there isn't.

Look here, Phelan! I'm out for your scalp, and I'm going to get it!"

"Come on, look for it!" crowed Phelan, fairly hopping up and down in rage and excitement. "Come a-runnin'! An' while you're huntin' my scalp, don't overlook one bet. I'm after yours!"

"Mine, you little shrimp! Why——"

"Yes, yours, Horrigan, you cur! You're pretty chesty an' strong standin' on the top of the organization. But you're no bloomin' Statue of Liberty! You can be tore down. An' here's the man who's goin' to do the tearin'. Me—Alderman Jimmy Phelan, of the Eighth!"

"Let it go at that for now. You'll wake up in the fall—when the election——"

"Let it go at that for keeps. I——"

"Mr. Wainwright," broke in Horrigan, "if this was the business you wanted to talk over with me here——"

"It isn't," assured the thoroughly uncomfortable financier.

"Oh! Then we can get down to real business, perhaps, when this fellow's gone."

"That lets me out," observed Phelan, cheerfully, as he picked up his hat. "G'-by, Mr. Wainwright. G'-by, Mr. Gibbs. Horrigan, I'll——"

"But you'll stay to lunch, Alderman, won't you?" urged Wainwright, with an effort at cordiality that deceived no one.

"No, thanks," replied Phelan. "When the curtain's down and the orchestra's gone home, I don't need no usher to poke me in the ribs to tell me the show's out. As for stayin' to break bread with Dick Horrigan, I'd sooner have a jolly little grub-fest with Wiley's poison squad. Good-by, all. Horrigan, as for you, some day I'll cross two sticks of dynamite under you and you'll scatter so wide that the inquest over your remains will have to be held in fourteen counties."

"I am so sorry, Mr. Horrigan, that this should have happened in my house," said Wainwright, as the irate Alderman stalked out, leaving the Boss staring after him in dumb fury. "I meant it for the best, and——"

"Mr. Wainwright," interrupted Horrigan, venting his pent-up wrath on his dismayed host, "this old world of ours is white with bones of failures, of fools, of dead beats. In other words, of folks who 'meant it for the best.' Now, let's get down to business."

"First let me introduce Mr. Gibbs. He——"

"Glad to meet him; but he'll excuse me when I say I never talk business when there's a third party around. No offense, Mr. Gibbs. Just

walk out and take a look at the view, like a good boy, won't you? Thanks!"

Gibbs, at a warning look of appeal from Wainwright, checked the angry retort that sprang to his lips, turned on his heel and walked out. Horrigan, who had observed the glance exchanged between the two men, grudgingly attempted to soften the effect of his brusqueness.

"I didn't mean to snub your friend," said he; "but Phelan riled me, and I took it out of the next man I spoke to. What on earth set you to having Phelan here to meet me for, anyway?"

"Just as I said. I wanted to win him over to us. We will need every strong man we can get this fall. We——"

"You know a lot about finance, Mr. Wainwright, but you're a rank outsider in politics, or you'd never have made such a break. I can't compromise with Phelan, even if I wanted to. He's stood out against me, and I've got to smash him. If he could defy me and get away with it, other leaders would think they could do it, too; and in less than no time the organization would be split up into a dozen factions, and I'd be down and out. Understand? I've got to look out for discipline if I'm to hold the place I've won. When a man

in the organization starts a fight against me, I must down him. There's no turning back. That's why I'm Boss. Every man in the crowd knows he's got to obey me or fight me, and that if it's fight, it's a battle to the death. And he's the man who does the dying. Not I. Now, you understand? So we can get to business. What——"

But business seemed this morning fated to many interruptions. The latest came in the form of Judge Newman, who, bustling into the room with all his customary pompous dignity, suddenly stopped in his tracks and wilted at sight of the Boss.

"Good-morning, Mr. Horrigan," said the Judge, ingratiatingly, wriggling under the Boss's glower. "I hope I'm not here too early and that Mr. Wainwright has interceded for——"

"For your renomination?" queried Horrigan, speaking as though to a disgraced servant. "If that's what you're here for you might have spared yourself the trouble. What I told you before still goes."

"But, Mr. Horrigan, consider how long I've been on the bench, and——"

"And it's time you got your nose out of the feed-bag and gave some one else a chance. You are——"

"I'm growing old, Mr. Horrigan!" pleaded the thoroughly cowed Judge. "How can I go back to law practice and compete with younger men? Besides, Mrs. Newman declares——"

"I can't help that," returned Horrigan, quite unmoved. "You've had your share. We've got to look out for our own active workers—for the men we can count on to do the right thing."

"But, Mr. Horrigan," protested the Judge, "I always try to do what is right."

"I said 'the right thing,' " corrected the Boss. "See the difference?"

"Excuse me, Judge," intervened Wainwright. "If you'll leave this matter in my hands I will try to convince Mr. Horrigan of your fitness. Just leave it all to me."

"Oh, thank you so much, Charles," cried the relieved little Judge; "I'm sure I can count on you. Mrs. Newman will be so grateful. Well, I won't detain you any longer. Good-by."

"Good-by, Judge," answered Wainwright, tolerantly.

"Good-by, Mr. Horrigan," went on Judge Newman, with effusion.

A grunt from Horrigan, who had turned his broad back on the visitor, was the only reply, and the Judge departed to bear the message of hope to Mrs. Newman.

"Have you any special objections to Newman?" asked Wainwright.

"No," said Horrigan, "except I think perhaps there's men who can do better by us. You know how much it means sometimes to have the right judge handle your case."

"I think at a pinch we can manage Newman, and——"

"Oh, if it's a favor to you, all right. But it doesn't do those judiciary fellows any harm to keep them guessing awhile. It tames 'em and teaches 'em to mind. Sort of keeps them in their places, you know. And now won't you tell that butler of yours not to let us be disturbed?"

Wainwright complied, and the two settled down to their deferred talk.

"How about the election this fall?" began the financier.

"We're already crowing; but just between you and me, it's going to be a hot fight. The people at large seem to be a little sore on the organization. A few deals lately have been a little raw, and some of the papers are kicking. Good Lord! If it wasn't for the newspapers, what a cinch a Boss would have in running a city! It'd be like taking pennies from a baby's bank. But——"

"Then you think there is some doubt about the election?"

"I wouldn't go so far as that. It'll be a tussle, but with plenty of cash, and the right man for Mayor—mark me, I say and the right man—we ought to win."

"The woods are full of 'right men,'" replied Wainwright. "The money is the chief thing to consider. That is why I asked you here to-day. This is the point I'm getting at: As soon as election is safely over, the Borough Street Railway will apply for a franchise for a car line from Blank Avenue to Dash Street, along the river front."

"I see!" nodded Horrigan; "and as you own the City Surface Line and as that is the Borough Street Railway's worst rival, you want the Borough's franchise bill killed when it comes before the Board of Aldermen."

"You're wrong. To paraphrase your own words, you know a lot about politics. I want the Borough Street Railway's franchise granted and I want that franchise to be perpetual."

"But I don't see what you're driving at. If you intend to merge the Borough Street Railway with your own City Surface Line, its charter will become void."

"I don't mean to merge them. I own both roads, and I run them separately."

"The —— you do!"

"That's a little surprise, eh? I haven't made any parade of it. I just went quietly to work, through Gibbs, and bought up a majority of the Borough stock. Now, don't you see how the granting of the franchise and the news that I control the road will work when they are made known?"

"Sure! It'll send that stock sky-high. You'll scoop in a million or two."

"A million or two!" echoed Wainwright, scornfully. "Nearer——"

"Hold on!" interrupted Horrigan. "What's that noise?"

He had jumped to his feet with an alacrity that was surprising in so large a man, and was listening intently.

"That clicking?" asked Wainwright. "Oh, that's only the private wire in my office."

"Private wire? Any operator?"

"Of course. Why?"

"Suppose he should happen to be listening to us?"

"Who? Thompson? Absurd!"

"I don't know. I'd rather——"

"Nonsense! It's Thompson, my private secretary. A man who's been with me nine years. I trust him as——"

"But I don't. I don't trust anybody. Send him into some other room."

"I can't. In his absence some important message might come, and if he wasn't there on the very moment to transmit it to me I might lose thousands. He's all right if ever a man was. I trust him implicitly."

"Oh, all right, then. Go on with what you were saying."

"I want the Borough Street Railway franchise made perpetual. Catch my drift?"

"Sure! But the papers and the property-holders will make a big kick."

"Let them. They'll soon get hoarse and have to rest their throats. As long as we get the votes what do we care if——"

"Yes, yes," agreed the Boss, impatiently. "That's all right; but what I want to know is: How does all this concern me?"

Horrigan threw himself back in his chair, uplifted cigar in one corner of his mouth, thumbs in waistcoat arm-holes, and eyed his host quizzically. Wainwright did not even pretend not to understand. Still, instead of giving a direct answer, he went on with seeming irrelevance:

"I am a public-spirited citizen. I believe civic welfare would suffer by any change in municipal administration. So, to keep the

present party in power, I am willing to donate to it $200,000 toward election expenses."

"That sounds pretty good as far as it goes, but maybe you didn't hear something I asked you a minute ago. What I want to know is: How does all this concern me?"

"I'm coming to that. As I said, I am a public-spirited citizen. I'm also a good friend. Such a good friend that I'm always glad to put my friends on to anything in the market that looks particularly promising. Suppose I carry for your account at the market price (that's 63 just now) 15,000 shares of Borough Street Railway stock?"

"Well?"

"If that franchise is granted, Borough stock will go up at least 25 points within two days. That would clear up for you a profit of—let's see—about $375,000."

Horrigan had pulled a pencil from his pocket and was figuring on the back of an envelope.

"Yes," he said at last, "that's right. Three hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars. That would be my profit, while yours would run into the millions. That's not warm enough friendship for me."

"Surely, that is a generous——"

"Generous, maybe; but I'd like something

munificent. Say 25,000 shares at 63. Then at the 25 point jump I'd make—I'd make," consulting his figures on the envelope, "something over $600,000. That sounds better to me, hey?"

"But, Mr. Horrigan!"

"You've got my terms. Take 'em or leave 'em."

"Oh, very well," conceded Wainwright, with lame graciousness. "Anything to oblige an old friend."

"Good! So we get $200,000 for election expenses and my personal account receives 25,000 shares at 63."

"Quite so. And now——"

"And now comes the question of the right man for Mayor. We——"

Again Horrigan paused, rising to his feet stealthily, like some ponderous cat, his head bent slightly, as though catching a faint or distant sound.

"What's the matter?" asked Wainwright, looking up.

"Nothing," returned Horrigan. But he did not resume his seat. Instead, as he talked he began to pace the room in apparent aimlessness; yet every turn chanced to bring him nearer and nearer to the door of the adjoining office.

"You see," he said, "we must have the right man. If we don't, we haven't a shadow of a show to win. We must be careful to choose the best man possible. In fact, Mr. Wainwright—in fact——"

His wanderings had brought him to the office door. With the last word he suddenly jerked it open.

Thompson stepped quietly over the threshold into the library, walked over to his employer, handed him a despatch, and went out again under the battery of Horrigan's glare, closing the office door after him.

"That fellow was listening to every word we said!" shouted the Boss as the door shut behind Thompson.

"How foolish you are!" protested Wainwright. "He was bringing me this message. I've tried and tempted and tested Thompson in a hundred ways, and he's always rung true. I trust him utterly."

"Well, I don't trust a man living," retorted Horrigan, reluctantly convinced. "I don't sign receipts or keep accounts or write letters or have witnesses when I talk. I always make it a question of veracity between me and the other man if there's an investigation. My word's as good as any one's and they can't prove anything against me in case of a show-down.

I advise you to try the same plan. It's a good one. And, in the meantime, if I were you I'd keep an eye on that secretary—he'll bear watching."

"Never mind about Thompson. He's all right. Let's get back to the election. Who have you in mind for Mayor?"

"Well," considered Horrigan, "he's got to be some one who isn't mixed up in politics or corporations. Some one the public isn't on to. A man with no queer past."

"I advise you to consult the calendar of saints and pick out your candidate there," sneered Wainwright, who could not clearly follow his guest's reasoning.

"No, I think I can find him on earth," laughed Horrigan. "He's got to be young, clever, educated, with a good name, a good family and social standing, and plenty of cash. The cash is important, so the public will understand he isn't a graft hunter. They've got to be made to think he's in the game for purity of politics and high principles and love of civic duty, and all that sort of thing. At the same time he's got to be some one we can handle to suit ourselves. That's the man who'll catch 'em coming and going. We've got to find him. Any suggestions?"

"Well, how about Gibbs?"

"Won't do. Broker and money juggler. The public wouldn't stand for him."

"Young Sawyer——"

"Sawyer was born foolish and he's been getting steadily sillier every year since. And his face shows it."

"Ten Broeck, then."

"Ten Broeck is too fond of turning a cigarette into the connecting link between fire and a fool. And, besides, he wears a monocle. What'd happen if he was to flash that monocle in a Fourth Ward meeting? There'd be a massacre."

"Well, who, then? Have you any one in mind?"

"Yes," assented Horrigan, "I have. Do you happen to know a young fellow who spends his summers near here—a chap named Bennett? Alwyn Bennett?"

"Certainly; I know him well. But——"

"Well, how does he strike you?"

"I'd never have thought of him in such a connection."

"Why shouldn't you? He pretty near fulfils all our qualifications. Besides, his father used to be a big man in the organization. Got some fat contracts from it in his time, too."

"But young Bennett has never——"

"He's well off, well educated, clever—and all

that. I ran across him last fall when he came over to help Lorimer in his fight in the Fourteenth. He made some rattling good speeches, and the boys all took a liking to him. A swell, but not a snob. Good mixer, good fellow, popular, clear-headed, no past—yes, he's our man. More I think it over, the surer I am."

"I shouldn't wonder if you're right. How would you like to talk it over with him now?"

"Now?"

"Yes; he's still around the place somewhere, I think."

Wainwright rang a bell and the butler appeared.

"Find Mr. Bennett," said the financier, "and ask him if he will step here for a moment."

"Yes," went on Horrigan, reflectively rubbing his huge, plump hands together, "he's the man for us. That is," he added with less assurance, "if we can handle him."

"I think we can," answered Wainwright, a fragment of his earlier conversation with Gibbs flashing across his memory. "You see, I have fairly good reasons for believing he's in love with my niece, Miss Dallas Wainwright."

"So? That's——"

"And, as I control her fortune and her brother's until Perry is twenty-five——"

"Oh, it's a cinch!" chuckled Horrigan. "He——"

"Mr. Bennett is playing tennis," reported the butler, coming to the door. "He will be here at once."

"Now," resumed Horrigan, "the only thing that remains is to find out if he'll consent. And then——"

"You wanted me, Mr. Wainwright?" asked Bennett, stepping through the long window from the veranda. "Oh, good-morning, Mr. Horrigan," he added, on seeing the second occupant of the room.

The young man was coatless and collarless, his silk shirt being turned in at the neck. In one hand he swung a tennis racket. With the other he mopped his flushed face, for the day was hot and the game had been swift.

"Yes," answered Wainwright. "I'm sorry to interrupt your tennis set, but we want to see you on a rather important matter. We've been talking about you."

"Thanks!" said Bennett, with a puzzled smile from one to the other of the two older men. "What about?"

"Want to be Mayor?" queried Horrigan, abruptly.

"What's the answer?" countered the perplexed youth.

"It isn't a joke," intervened Wainwright. "Mr. Horrigan is in earnest."

"In earnest! I hope the heat hasn't gone to his head."

"You don't understand," put in Horrigan. "I control the party's nominations. The nomination for Mayor is yours, if you'll like it."

"Not—not really?" gasped Alwyn, aghast.

"Yes, really. We——"

"But with a whole organization full of good material, why do you come to me?"

"Because you're the man we want."

"As an answer that's excellent. But as an explanation it's mystifying."

"I'll tell you. We're looking forward to a risky fight and——"

"And since you see no chance of winning, you pick me out as the victim instead of some organization man? Good idea as far as you're concerned; but I beg to decline—without thanks!"

"No, no," corrected Wainwright. "Mr. Horrigan thinks you have a strong chance of winning."

"That's right," corroborated the Boss. "It'll be a hard fight, but with the right man we'll win. And we believe you're the right man. Even if you lose, you'll show the world what

you're made of. Folks admire a fighter. They haven't much use for an idler."

The coarsely spoken words brought back with a rush Dallas Wainwright's plea, and his own yearning to do something to make her proud of him—to win her by great deeds—to prove his love worth her acceptance. Was this the chance? The chance he had so eagerly longed for? It seemed providential. His face alight with the joy of battle and the hope of his heart's reward, Bennett turned upon the waiting Boss.

"I accept!"

"Good!" yelled Horrigan, slapping him resoundingly on the back. "Good boy! Now we'll——"

"But remember one thing, Mr. Horrigan," interrupted Bennett, and his careless boyhood seemed to have fallen away from him like a discarded garment, leaving the manhood and rugged strength stripped of all the follies and idleness that had hitherto masked it; "remember one thing: If I win this fight—if I am elected Mayor—I shall never once swerve from my solemn oath of office. I——"

Wainwright, uneasy at the candidate's unwonted words and manner, started to speak, but Horrigan deftly interfered.

"Of course you'll keep your oath of office!"

HORRIGAN AND WAINWRIGHT PERSUADE BENNETT TO RUN FOR MAYOR.—Page 60.

he bellowed jovially. "Of course you will. That's understood."

Then, in an undertone to Wainwright, as Alwyn moved away, the Boss whispered:

"Don't you butt in! Leave him to me! That silly reform talk don't mean anything. It's the way all youngsters in politics blow off steam. Leave him to me!"

CHAPTER IV.

A FIGHT AND A VICTORY.

THE next few months were a period of unprecedented toil and excitement for Alwyn Bennett. He sometimes wondered at his own eloquence. Speech after speech he made in every section of the city; in half-built suburbs, in halls where nine-tenths of his hearers were in evening dress and where familiar faces dotted the place; in overcrowded, smoke-reeking auditoriums, where not one man in three wore a collar and where a score of nationalities vied for precedence.

With a versatility that delighted Horrigan, the candidate managed to adapt himself to every audience, and, moreover, to impress his hearers with a sense of his absolute sincerity and honesty. In the crowded, polyglot meetings he hit on the plan of speaking to representatives of each race in their own language. In a single evening, so the papers recorded, he had made speeches in English, French, Ger-

man, Italian and Spanish. At some meetings toughs had tried to confuse him by interrupting with questions, joking comment or insult. For each, Alwyn, without breaking the thread of his discourse, found some quick reply so apt as to turn the laugh on his tormentor and turn the audience's sympathy to himself.

At last Election Day came and went. And Alwyn Bennett by a fair majority carried his entire ticket to victory. Even his severest critics in the organization were forced to admit that Bennett, and Bennett alone, had saved the party from severe defeat. Horrigan's judgment and choice of men for the thousandth time in the Boss's crooked political career was vindicated, and Horrigan himself was overjoyed beyond measure. Nor did the fact that he had failed to oust Alderman Phelan in the primaries wholly cloud the Boss's delight.

There was, however, a slight cloud on Alwyn's own triumph. For Dallas Wainwright was not present to share that triumph. Within a few days after Horrigan's visit to the Wainwright place, Dallas had gone with an aunt on an eight months' tour of Europe and the Mediterranean. But Perry, who at her secret request had kept her posted on every detail of the stirring campaign, cabled her the

result on election night. And the following day a reply message of congratulation crossed the Atlantic to gladden Alwyn's heart. By a letter that followed a week later, Dallas asked the first political favor the future Mayor was called upon to grant. She begged that in his office Bennett would try to find a place for Cynthia Garrison. In consequence of which, when the young man made up his list of personal appointments, Miss Garrison found herself listed as assistant private secretary at a decidedly comfortable salary.

It was while she was working in that capacity in the Mayor's private room in the City Hall, during Bennett's lunch hour, one day in midwinter, that her solitude was broken by the entrance of a visitor.

Perry Wainwright, redolent of bandbox and soap as ever, found his way past the doorkeeper and burst into the sanctum.

"Hello!" was his greeting. "His Honor isn't around?"

"No," answered Cynthia demurely, looking up from her work with the most businesslike air she could assume; "he's out at lunch."

"I knew he would be," grinned Perry. "I timed it fine, didn't I?"

"If you knew he was out, why did you come?" she asked severely. "You know I

never receive callers during business hours. If you didn't come to see Mr. Bennett——"

"But I did. Honest I did. I have a message for him. It's awf'ly important. He mustn't miss it."

"Perhaps you'll leave it with me? I can——"

"No; it's got an answer to it. I'll have to wait, I suppose."

He sat down, uninvited, with an air of mock resignation that was too much for Cynthia's gravity.

"Perry Wainwright!" she exclaimed in exasperation, "how often am I to tell you you mustn't bother me here in office hours?"

"Now you've hurt my feelings," announced Perry in solemn conviction. "But," he added, generously, "I'll forgive you; and to prove it I'll give you a peace offering. See? Your old Boston terriers, Betty and Prince Charlie, and me holding them."

And he laid before her a photograph. She caught it up with a little cry of pleasure.

"Oh, the beauties!" she exclaimed.

"We do look well in that pose," he admitted modestly.

"I was speaking of the dogs," she reproved him with lofty scorn.

"But I'm in the picture, too," he explained. "I'm the one with the hat on. And——"

"Thank you so much for the picture. I shall keep it always. They're the nicest dogs I ever had."

"I'm nice, too; and it ain't my fault I'm not a dog. I——"

"I told you once before not to give up hope. You'll grow. I——"

"I told that to some fellows at the club and we tried to figure it out, and we decided you were guying me."

"What clever men you must be at that club! Are you going to the Administration Ball next week?"

"Are you?"

"Why?"

"Because that's the answer. I've never been to an Administration Ball, but if you're there I guess it——"

"Don't be silly! The Administration Ball is a very great function indeed. I've been asking questions about it. Not only every one connected with the Administration goes, but all sorts of capitalists and other people like that. I've heard that some of the biggest financial deals are arranged during that ball. Isn't it queer?"

"Not especially. There's a deal I'm think-

ing of putting through, myself, that night, if I don't get a good chance earlier. A deal that means a lot to me."

"Then why wait till the ball? Why not——"

"I'd do it now, only Bennett might come in before——"

"What a worker Mr. Bennett is!" broke in Cynthia, turning very pink and hastening to change the subject.

"In the old days we thought he was the soul of laziness. But now he's working here night and day. He's not only the youngest Mayor this city ever had, but I think he's the busiest, too. He——"

The eulogy on the new Mayor was cut short by that dignitary's appearance from the center room. As Alwyn paused to hang up his coat and hat and pull off his gloves, Cynthia bent once more over her work, while Perry straightened up and tried to look as though he really had business of pressing importance with His Honor.

The months had brought changes to Bennett. There were care lines on his face and his eyes were tired. A few silver threads, too, had crept into the darker hair on his temples. There was little now about him to suggest the idler.

"Well, old man," he exclaimed on seeing Perry, "what's the excuse this time?"

"The what?" asked the youth, uneasily.

"The excuse. You come here—when I'm likely to be out—about four times a week, and always with a perfectly new excuse for your intrusion. I tolerate you for the originality of those excuses. What is to-day's?"

"I have no need of an excuse," replied Perry with an air of hurt dignity. "I am the bearer of a most important message to you."

"From whom?"

"From—from—— Dallas is home. Landed this morning."

A light came into the Mayor's tired eyes at the news.

"And the message?" he asked eagerly.

"That's the message. She's home."

"She sent you to tell me that?"

"No; not exactly that," evaded Perry, wriggling uncomfortably.

"Well, what was her message then?"

"She—she didn't send any."

"Then who sent the message that she has come home?"

"Well, the fact is I sent it myself. That's why I brought it."

"Oh, you poor idiot!" laughed Bennett. "The same old excuse in a new shape! Well,

now you're here, you can stay just five minutes. I'm too busy to play with little boys to-day."

"Little boys! I'll be twenty-two next spring. I——"

"Any messages while I was out, Miss Garrison?"

"Yes, one," answered Cynthia. "Your mother telephoned that she would be here at half-past two. She said she had a surprise for you."

"Say," remarked Perry, feeling he was being excluded from the talk, "I'd go easy on that surprise if I were you, Alwyn. I've had surprises over the telephone myself, and they're punk. Once a girl——"

"Alderman Phelan would like to speak to Your Honor," said Ingram, the old doorkeeper, popping out of the anteroom.

"Show him in," answered Bennett. "Now, then, Perry——"

"Were you about to ask me to stay a while longer?" asked the boy; "because I'm sorry, but I can't. Good-by. Good-afternoon, Miss Garrison. Glad you liked the photo. So long. Maybe I'll bring another message from Dallas to-morrow."

"What can Phelan want of me, I wonder?" mused Bennett, half aloud. "He and I scarce-

ly—— Good-afternoon, Alderman! I think this is the first time you've honored me with a visit."

"Then be lenient with a first offense, Your Honor," suggested Phelan, shaking hands with the Mayor and nodding pleasantly to Cynthia as she passed out to her own office.

"Something important, I suppose," hazarded Bennett.

"Maybe it is important and maybe it isn't," returned Phelan. "It all depends on whether that was a true story in the Chronicle to-day about your vetoing the Borough Street Railway bill. If you've really vetoed that bill all I'll have to do is to say, 'Sorry I can't stay longer,' and get out."

"No," said Bennett, "that announcement wasn't authorized. I haven't vetoed the Borough Street Railway bill. In fact, I haven't made public any decision on it. Why?"

"I'm glad to hear it, and, that being the case, I'll invite myself to a seat and stay awhile. Say, Your Honor, on the level, that Borough bill was the rawest thing that ever came across. Gee! but they did their work with a meat-axe!"

"Then you weren't one of the Aldermen who voted for it?"

"Me? Nothin' doin'. I don't belong to Dick Horrigan's 'solid thirteen.' He can't

buy and sell me at his own terms like ne does them thirteen geezers."

"And yet, Alderman, from your reputation——"

"From my reputation I'm a crook, hey? Well, there's crooks and crooks. And I'm one of the other kind, if I'm crooked at all, which I deny most enthoosiastically. At least I follow no Horrigan whistle."

"Then why are you here in regard to the Borough bill?"

"Perhaps it's on the theory of 'set a thief to catch a thief.'"

"Well," laughed Bennett, amused in spite of himself by the Alderman's frankness, "at least you call a spade a spade."

"I sure don't refer to it vague, but as a 'utensil.' You don't need any foot-note explanations in one syllable when Jimmy Phelan's talking. Every move a picture. If I hadn't been through the game from shuffle to cash in, would I be wise to what the Horrigan crowd is framing up on you now? Say, I've done some raw work in my time, but this Borough business is the coarsest yet. They must think you're the original Mr. Good Thing."

"You speak as if I were to be made responsible for——"

"And ain't you?" cried Phelan. "Sure you are. When the people get wise to what they're up against and commence to do their scream, will they remember that So-and-so framed the bill and that such and such Aldermen voted for it? Not them. What the public will remember is that you signed it. It'll go screechin' down the corridors of time as 'the iniquitous Borough Franchise bill that Bennett signed.' Catch the idea?"

"Yes," said Bennett grimly, "I understand. But what I don't see is why you should have taken the trouble to come here and warn me of this. You've never shown any special fondness for me hitherto."

"That's right; but I've shown bunches of unfondness for Chesty Dick Horrigan. And Horrigan's the man who's rushin' the Borough bill through. Lord, what a bill! It's so crooked that if it was laid out like a street the man who tried to walk along it would meet himself coming back. Why, Your Honor, I——"

"Mr. Wainwright, Your Honor," said Ingram at the door; "says he won't detain you long."

"Let him in if you like," suggested Phelan. "I can wait. Shall I go into the other——"

"No. Wait here if you choose. His business isn't likely to be private."

"I'm sorry to break in on your rush hours," said Wainwright as he advanced to greet the Mayor. "I won't keep you long. Good-afternoon, Alderman."

"Howdy?" returned Phelan, walking over to the far end of the office, where, by falling into deep and admiring study of a particularly atrocious portrait of some earlier Mayor, he denoted that he was temporarily out of the conversation.

"I'll come to the point at once, Mr. Bennett," began Wainwright. "I called to see you about the Borough Street Railway bill."

"That's an odd coincidence," answered Bennett. "I was going to call you up this afternoon and ask your opinion of it. What do you think of the measure?"

"What does he think of it?" muttered Phelan, addressing the portrait in an aside that was perfectly audible. "What does he think of it? And him ownin' the rival road! Oh, easy! Ask him a real hard one!"

"You're mistaken, Alderman," returned Wainwright blandly. "I am inclined to favor the passage of the Borough bill."

Phelan shot one keen glance of incredulity

at the financier, then wheeled about and resumed his rapt study of the portrait.

"Yes," continued Wainwright; "I admit that my City Surface Line is, in a way, the rival of the Borough Street Railway. But in a big city like this there's surely room for both lines to carry on a prosperous business. So why should they try to injure each other?"

"Why, oh, why?" echoed Phelan, again addressing the portrait. "Can I be gettin' so old that I've begun hearin' queer things that's never said?"

Wainwright paid no heed to the interpolation, but went on:

"Of course the franchise will be a good thing for the Borough road, but it needn't hurt the City Surface Line. Besides, the passing of the bill made Borough stock rise from 63 to 81. Then when that unauthorized announcement was made to-day that Your Honor would veto it, the stock tumbled from 81 to 73. Just see what power rests with you, Mr. Bennett! If you should veto the bill the Borough stock will slump to almost nothing. Think what that will mean to widows and orphans and all sorts of poor people who have invested all their savings in that stock!"

"I'll be hearin' harps twangin' next!" groaned Phelan in wonder. "Has the poor,

dear man got swellin' of the heart, or is he maybe the advance agent of the millennium? To think of old Tightwad Wainwright——"

Ingram forestalled any reply from the financier by entering with the tidings that Thompson was in the anteroom with an important message for Wainwright.

"May I see him in here?" asked the visitor. "It is my private secretary and——"

"Certainly," asserted Bennett. "Show him in, Ingram."

"I'd like to see a private secretary of mine come buttin' in like this," confided Phelan to the picture. "I'd chase him so far he'd discover a new street. I'd——"

The Alderman broke off short. His eye had fallen on Thompson as the latter entered. Phelan stood rigid, with mouth open and eyes bulging, taking in every detail of the quiet, pallid young man's appearance. The secretary, meanwhile, had gone up to Wainwright and begun to deliver his message.

"Mr. Horrigan called you up, sir," said he, "just a minute or so after you left the office. He wishes you to come and see him immediately, if possible."

"All right," answered the financier. "I'll come at once. I'm sorry, Your Honor, that I am called away just now, for I'd like to dis-

cuss this Borough bill further with you. But what I wished to express can be said in a nutshell. If I, who own the rival road, am in favor of granting the Borough franchise, I can't see why any one else should object to it. Come on, Thompson. Good-day, Your Honor. Good-day, Alderman."

The financier passed out. Thompson was following when Phelan, who had never once removed his eyes from the secretary, stepped in front of him.

"Well, young man!" said he.

"Well, sir?" said Thompson in mild surprise.

"You remember me?"

"I don't think so, sir."

"H'm! That's queer! I'm Alderman Phelan of the Eighth."

"I've read about you, of course, sir, but I——"

"But you don't know me? Never met me before?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but I can't recall it if I did. Good-day, sir."

The secretary hurried out after his employer. Phelan, with a puzzled shake of the head, seemed trying to solve some elusive problem. But Bennett, who had not noted the brief scene

between Thompson and the Alderman, broke in on the latter's musing with the remark:

"You appeared to be amazed at Mr. Wainwright's attitude toward the Borough Street Railway franchise."

"'Amazed' is a mild, gentle word for my feeling," declared the Alderman. "To hear that old flint-heart prattlin' about widows and orphans and fair play—why, say, Your Honor—I know Charles Wainwright from 'way back, and I tell you he has the same affection for the money of widows and orphans that a tom-cat has for a canary. As for fair play—he wouldn't recognize it if he was to hear it through a megaphone. He's up to something! I don't know just what, but I'll——"

"Come! come!" remonstrated Bennett good-humoredly. "I'm sure you do Wainwright an injustice. He——"

"He's a fine old bird! Do you chance to remember the Garrison case, nine years back? President Garrison of the Israel Putnam Trust Company——"

"Who shot himself after being ruined by a financier who was his dearest friend? Yes. What has that to do with——"

"With Wainwright? Oh, nothin' much. Only Wainwright happened to be the financier."

"No! You must be mistaken."

"Am I? I ought to know something about it. I was Chief of Police at the time and handled the case. It was I who suppressed Wainwright's name. For a small consideration I——"

"Wainwright!" gasped Bennett. "Of all men! But——"

"So you see why I coppered the 'mercy' and 'fair play' cards when he dealt 'em just now," purred Phelan. "There's something big behind this talk of his in favor of the Borough bill. Wasn't it at his house last summer that Horrigan offered you the nomination? That's the story. And——"

"Yes; on the 25th of July. He——"

"The 25th of July, hey? That was the day he had me out there. The day I met that feller Gibbs. By the way, Your Honor, the papers say it's Gibbs's firm that's buyin' all that Borough stock. They've been buyin' it up, on the quiet, for months. I begin to see a lot of funny little lights that make this thing clearer. Gibbs is buyin' Borough stock. He's Wainwright's chum. Horrigan and Wainwright frame up your nomination. Then, the minute you come into power, this Borough Franchise bill is flashed on you by Horrigan, an' Wainwright begs you to sign it. Take my tip—

Wainwright owns the Borough road, as well as the City Surface. And Horrigan's gettin' a fat swad of stock for arrangin' the franchise. Oh, they've got Your Honor all tied up in ribbons, like you was a measly bookay. You and me ought to get together and fight this thing out, side by side. An' when once I get the Indian sign on Dick Horrigan——"

"But I've no personal quarrel with Horrigan. He——"

"You've the same quarrel with him that the pigeon has with the muskrat. If you don't use your wings you'll be swallowed. Let me put you on to a few of the little jokers in that bill of his. You see——"

"I see more about that bill than you think," interposed Bennett. "I've worked over it night after night with my lawyer. Don't you get the idea I've been asleep just because I haven't been making any premature disturbance."

"I think," observed Phelan slowly—"I think I'm beginnin' to get a new line on you and understand you better. If it's any joy to you to know it, Jimmy Phelan said: 'You're all right!' "

He held out his hand, and Bennett gripped it cordially.

"I'm glad we had this talk, Alderman," said

he. "We are fighting from different points of view, but our main object is the same. I think we can pull together on this matter."

"We sure can!" agreed Phelan. "An' as for Horrigan, when I'm done with him he'll be rolled up in a nice bundle and I'll print on it in big letters: 'Use all the hooks you like!' "

"Mrs. Bennett, sir," said Ingram.

"I thought you was single!" exclaimed Phelan.

"It's my mother. Show her in."

From the musty antechamber came the rustle of feminine attire, and Mrs. Bennett came in. Devoted as he was to his mother, Alwyn now had no eyes for her, for over her shoulder he had caught a glimpse of another face.

ALDERMAN PHELAN TELLS HOW HE "PICNICS" HIS CONSTITUENTS IN SUMMER, AND "TURKEYS" THEM IN WINTER.—Page 82.

CHAPTER V.

IN TROUBLED WATERS.

"DALLAS!" cried Bennett, oblivious of his surroundings—of everything except that the girl he had so long missed, and who had inspired him to all he had achieved—was standing before him.

It was Dallas herself who brought him to a sense of the others' presence. For, as he sprang forward to meet her and eagerly grasped both her outstretched hands, the girl bowed in mock reverence and answered his ardent greeting with a demure—

"Good-afternoon, Your Honor!"

"Don't!" he begged, half in jest. "It's so good to see you again that I——"

"I sent word that I had a surprise for you, Alwyn," interrupted his mother. "I knew it would please you. But," with a glance at the Alderman, "you're busy? Perhaps we——"

"Not at all, mother. May I present Alderman Phelan? Miss Wainwright, this is——"

"Alderman Phelan, of the Eighth," amended the politician, thoroughly ill at ease in the presence of the visitors. "I must be goin' now, Your Honor. I——"

But Dallas had come forward with a smile that melted the speaker's embarrassment in an instant.

"The Alderman Phelan who gives turkeys to all those poor people at Christmas?" she asked in genuine interest. "I've often read about——"

"The same, ma'am, at your service," assented the delighted Phelan. "I fill 'em with turkey and coal in winter and I take their wives and kids on outings in summer. Ever been to one of the James Q. Phelan outings, miss?"

"No," replied Dallas, with a perfectly grave face. "I'm sorry to say I haven't. Tell me about them, won't you?"

"They've got to be seen to be understood. A thousand poor tired wives and white-faced, spindly kids turned out into the country for the only glimpse of green grass and shady trees they ever get all year. A thousand mothers and children out in a cool grove with nothing to do but roll around the soft grass and play and eat all the fancy grub they can hold. Maybe, miss, it wouldn't mean a lot to you, but if you'd been workin' twelve months in a stuffy,

dark, smelly back tenement room, toilin' like a slave to keep food an' clothes betwixt the kids an' starvation, an' was barely able to keep body an' soul together—well, maybe then you'd understand what them outings an' turkey-fests an' loads of coal means to the poor; an' they won't turn down Jimmy Phelan at Horrigan's orders."

"I do understand," cried Dallas, her big eyes bright with tears. "I understand, and, in behalf of all women and children, I thank you with my whole heart!"

"You're all right, miss!" muttered the delighted, embarrassed Phelan, at once at a loss for words. "You're—you're all right! I'll leave it to His Honor if——"

"Indeed she is!" broke in a suave voice, at whose sound the little spell of sentiment was broken and which caused Phelan and Bennett to turn in annoyance toward the door.

Scott Gibbs, bland, well-groomed, quite ignoring the other men's lack of welcome, stood bowing on the threshold.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, Alwyn," whispered Mrs. Bennett in a hurried aside to her son, as the latter summoned up sufficient civility to greet the newcomer—"I forgot to tell you. Mr. Gibbs was calling on Dallas when I

stopped for her, and he asked leave to come along. I'm sorry, but——"

"How are you, Bennett?" Gibbs was saying. "And—Mr. Phelan, too, isn't it? Alderman, I'm glad to see you again. You remember me? Scott Gibbs? I met——"

"Yes," said Phelan; "I remember you, all right. You was up to Wainwright's last summer, that day me an' Horrigan sent the dove of peace screechin' up a tree. I didn't know you visited the City Hall, too."

"I don't, as a rule," answered Gibbs. "I came here with Mrs. Bennett and Miss Wainwright. I wanted a glimpse of the man who can make one pen-stroke that will send Borough Street Railway stock up to 100 or down to 10."

"Do you mean," broke in Dallas, "that Mr. Bennett can really have such an effect on the stock market?"

"That and more," Gibbs assured her. "Why, the mere rumor that he meant to veto the Borough's Franchise bill has sent the stock tumbling eight points since the market opened today."

"What power for one man!" exclaimed the girl, turning to Bennett in surprise. "And are you going to veto it?"

"Office secrets," reproved Alwyn jestingly. "Hands off!"

"Veto it!" echoed Gibbs with a laugh. "Of course he isn't. It would be too hard upon his friends—unfair and unkind, to say the least."

"But why?" queried Dallas, forestalling Alwyn, who was about to speak.

"Because," cut in Gibbs, before Bennett could interfere, "the men who are backing the Borough bill are the men who made him Mayor. It wouldn't be square for him to turn his new power against the very men who gave him that power. Now, would it?"

"By 'the men who are backing the bill' whom do you mean?" asked Bennett.

"Oh, I just spoke in generalities. As a matter of fact, the break in the price to-day was lucky for those who wanted to buy."

"An' your firm's doin' most of the buyin', I'm told," interpolated Phelan.

"We have a great deal of the stock, I admit," said Gibbs. "So you see, Bennett, you can make me or break me. I place myself in your hands."

"I see you are taking a most unfair advantage of me, Mr. Gibbs," retorted Alwyn with some heat. "You have no right to thrust this information on me and to appeal——"

"But I was only——"

"You were trying to influence my action toward the Borough bill. You cannot do it."

"Why, I didn't think you'd be angry at——"

"I'm not. Let's drop the subject, please."

"I only answered Miss Wainwright's questions. I——"

"We'll leave Miss Wainwright's name out of the matter," replied Bennett.

"Certainly, if you like," assented Gibbs, with a shrug of his broad shoulders. "I am afraid my time is up. Good-day, Bennett. I'm sorry you misconstrued——"

"I didn't. Good-day."

"I'll be on my way, too," announced Phelan, breaking the awkward pause that followed Gibbs's exit. "Ladies, I'm proud to have met you. If either of you knows a poor woman needin' a turkey, or a family wantin' an outing, just drop me a line, and I'll see they get it. An' they needn't come from my ward, neither."

"That's bad politics, Alderman!" laughed Bennett.

"It's good humanity, though. There's two things I love to do: First, to down the man who's me enemy, an' second, to give good times to folks who's strangers to fun. Good-by,

Your Honor; I'll be in agin, now I've found my way. Good-by, ladies."

"Alwyn," said Mrs. Bennett, as the Alderman bowed himself out with many flourishes, "I want to see Cynthia. Can I go into her office now, or is she too busy? I'll be back in a few minutes, Dallas, and bring her with me. I know how anxious she is to see you again."

"I wonder what Phelan would think of that for 'raw' work!" thought Alwyn, as the old lady bustled into the inner room, leaving Dallas and himself alone. Perhaps Dallas, too, understood, for her manner was less assured than usual as her eyes met his.

"It is so good—so good to see you again," he said. "It seems years instead of months since you went away."

"But how splendidly you've filled the time! And what a magnificent fight you made! I was so proud of you, Alwyn!"

"Really? I remember you once said I was a mere idler—a rich man's son—and that you weren't at all proud of me."

"That is past. We must forget it. You are awake now."

"Forget it? Not for worlds! I owe all my success to you, Dallas. It was your face that strengthened me when there seemed no hope. It was the memory of your words that kept me

brave and made me resolve to win against all odds. You were my inspiration, the light in my darkness. At each step I thought 'Dallas would be glad,' or 'Dallas would not approve of this.' And I steered my course accordingly —to victory."

"No, no!" murmured the girl. "It was your own courage—your strength——"

"Not mine. It was your faith in me. Do you know, I think no man ever accomplishes anything by himself. There's always a woman, I think, behind every great achievement. The world at large does not see her—but she's in the heart of every man who is making the fight. He battles in her name as did the knights of old. And the triumph is hers, not his. Whether his reward is the crown of love or the crown of thorns, she is the inspiration."

"Then if I had a share in your success, I am very happy, Alwyn. For your name is in every mouth. You are *the man of the hour,* even as you were in the olden days on the football field. Oh, I am proud of you! Very, very proud. There is a glorious future before you."

"That all rests in your dear hands," cried Alwyn.

"Future or present, Dallas, it's all the same; if only you——"

"Say, Bennett!" roared a deep voice as the

door from the outer office was banged open and Horrigan, red-faced and angry, burst in, "I understand that you've—— Oh, I didn't know you had a lady calling on you," he broke off.

"Well, I have," retorted Bennett, furious at the untimely intrusion. "Ingram should have told you that at the door."

"I don't stop to hear what folks tell me at doors. I'll wait outside till you're alone."

"Don't trouble to wait. Good-by!"

"You can bet I'll trouble to wait," snarled Horrigan. "There's something you and I have got to settle to-day. Understand ? I'll be outside. Don't keep me waiting long!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAYOR AND THE BOSS.

"WHAT a strange man!" exclaimed Dallas Wainwright in wonder, as the anteroom door slammed behind the Boss. "And what utterly abominable manners! Who is he, Alwyn?"

"Horrigan."

"Richard Horrigan, the——"

"The Boss. Yes. He has a pleasing way of stamping into this office, unasked, as if he owned it and as if I were his clerk. But today's behavior was the worst yet. It's got to stop!"

"But don't do or say anything reckless, Alwyn! Promise me. Remember how strong he is!"

"There is no danger of his letting me forget his power," said Bennett with a bitter smile. "He——"

"But you'll be careful, won't you? Please do! For my sake. And you mustn't keep him waiting if there's a way out through Cyn-

thia's office. We'll go by that. Good-by. I'll explain to your mother. Office business must come first. Won't you call this evening? I'll be home and alone."

Despite Bennett's remonstrances she was firm; and it was in no pleasant frame of mind that the Mayor threw himself into a seat when he was left alone in the room. That the talk with Dallas, which had promised so much for him, should be thus rudely interrupted. That—— Horrigan flung open the door and stamped in. The Boss's anger had by no means subsided, in the few moments of delay, but had rather grown until it vibrated in his every word and gesture. He wasted no time in formalities, but came to the point with all the tender grace and tact of a pile-driver.

"Look here, Bennett," he rumbled, menace underlying tone and look. "I'm told Phelan's been here this afternoon. What did he want?"

"To see me," answered Bennett calmly, the effort at self-control visible only in the whitening of the knuckles that gripped the desk edge.

"What did he want to see you about?"

"A business matter."

"What business matter?"

"Mine."

"Yours, eh?" sneered Horrigan. "Well, young man, I want you to understand here

and now, that no one can be chummy with Jim Phelan and be my man at the same time. Got that through your head?"

"Yes," assented Bennett, "I think I have. And, while we're speaking plainly, I want you to understand, here and now, that no one can bully me, either here or elsewhere, and that I'm no man's man. Have you got that through your head?"

Horrigan stared in savage amazement. He doubted if his ears had not played him false. Bennett had always treated the Boss with uniform courtesy and Horrigan belonged to the too-numerous class who do not understand until too late the difference between gentle breeding and weak cowardice. That a man should speak to him courteously and not interlard his talk with oaths, obscenity or roughness, seemed to Horrigan, as it does to many another boor, an evidence of timidity and lack of virility. A Damascus blade is a far more harmless-looking weapon than a bludgeon, yet it is capable, when the necessity arises, of far deadlier work.

It is only the man whose gentleness has not granite strength as its foundation, who deserves the newly-popular term of "mollycoddle."

Had Horrigan's large experience with men

been extended to embrace this fact he would probably never have picked out Alwyn Bennett, in the first place, as a candidate for Mayor, nor deemed the younger man a fit tool for the organization's crooked work. The French nobles of the old régime, whose polish of manner was the envy of the world, fought like devils on occasion and went to death on the scaffold with a smile and a jest on their lips; while many a brutal demagogue, in the same circumstances, broke down and screamed for mercy. However, Horrigan chanced to be more familiar with the history of the organization than with that of France. Hence, deeming Bennett's reply a mere sporadic flash of defiance from a properly cowed spirit, he resolved to crush the rebellion at a blow.

"Don't give me any insolence!" he roared. "I won't stand for it and——"

"Moreover," quietly continued Bennett, as though the Boss had not spoken, "I shall be very much obliged if, in future, you will knock at my door instead of bursting in on me. This is my private office, not yours."

"Do you mean to——"

"I've explained as clearly as I can just what I mean. If you don't understand me I can't supply you with intelligence."

"Bennett," said the Boss, his burning rage

steadied down to a white heat, far more dangerous but less incoherent, "you and me are talking too much and saying too little. We've got to come to a show-down. You're a clever boy and you made a rattling good fight, and you're on the right side of the public and of the press, too. You're the best material we've got, and if you try and do the right thing, there's no limit to what you can rise to. But only if you do the right thing."

"'The right thing?'" echoed Bennett. "What do you mean by the right thing?"

"I mean you've got to do the right thing by the men who put you where you are to-day."

"That's fair; but who 'put me where I am to-day?'"

"I did—I, Dick Horrigan! Whoever heard of you till I took you up? Nobody. If I didn't make you Mayor, who did, I'd like to know?"

"The voters. The people of this city."

"The voters!" scoffed Horrigan; "the deuce they did! Who had you nominated?"

"You did; but it was the public who elected me, and I'm going to obey your orders in one thing—I'm going to 'do the right thing by the men who put me where I am to-day.' I'm going to pay the voters for their trust in me by giving them a fair and square administra-

tion. In the case of this Borough Street Railway Franchise bill, for instance," tapping the document lying before him on his desk, "before I sign that bill I intend to make sure it's for the good of the people, that it is for the good of the city, not merely for the good of Richard Horrigan and a clique of his friends and heelers. No, don't swear! It'll do you no good. I'm firm on this matter. If you're discontented with me, it's your own fault. I warned you months ago that if I was elected I should keep my oath of office. As for this Borough bill——"

"As for this Borough bill," broke in Horrigan savagely, "you'll sign it. If you don't——"

"Well?" queried Bennett, as the Boss paused, choked by his own fury. "If I don't sign it—what then?"

"If you don't, your political career is ended from this time on. See? It's ended! Smashed flat! You think of yourself as a fine, promising young man who's on the road to the Governorship and maybe to the White House. Well, you aren't. You're what Dick Horrigan made you. And your future will be what Dick Horrigan chooses to make it. I lifted you up and I can tear you down just as easy. And, what's more, by ——, I'll do it if you

don't sign the Borough bill. I'm a man of my word, and before ever you were nominated I pledged my word to have that bill put through. The bill paid your election expenses. It——"

"I paid my own election expenses. You know that."

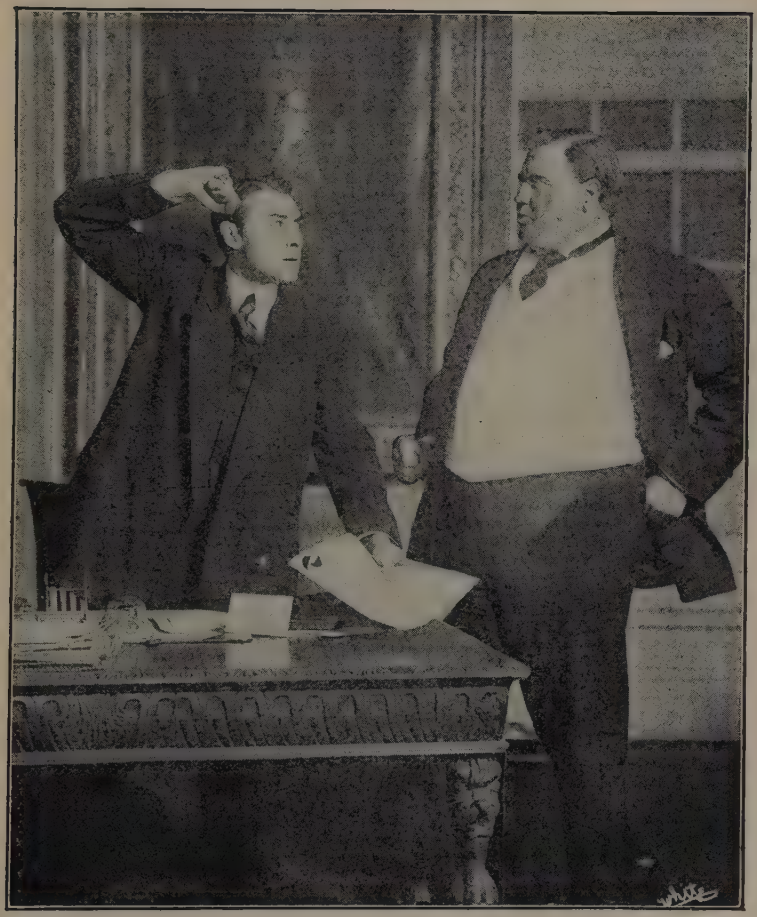
"Your personal expenses, perhaps. But who paid for parades, halls, banners, fireworks, speakers, advertisements, workers and watchers and all the other million things that elected you? The men behind that Borough bill paid them. And they did it on the understanding that you'd sign the bill."

"In other words," remarked Bennett, "you made a bargain for me, but you can't keep it."

"Oh, I'll keep it all right. You'll sign that bill, or you'll——"

"Mr. Horrigan," exclaimed Bennett, controlling his temper with more and more difficulty, "you said something just now about our coming to a show-down. This is the time for it. I want you to remember henceforth that I wear no man's collar—yours or any one else's—and that you can't deliver any goods you've bargained for in my name. If I sign that bill it won't be under your orders, but because I think it right."

"Oh!" laughed Horrigan, who thought he began to see the drift of the other's mind. "I



BENNETT LAYS DOWN THE LAW TO THE ASTONISHED BOSS. HORRIGAN.—Page 96.

don't hold out for that. "I don't care why you sign it as long as you do sign it."

"What do you think about the bill yourself?" inquired Alwyn. "Do you consider it honest?"

"What do I care? It's got to be signed and——"

"I care; and I think the bill is fraudulent."

"Getting tender in the conscience, aren't you? Well——"

"If you put it that way, yes. I think this Borough bill is crooked from first to last. But——"

"What's the matter with it? Ain't——"

"Let me explain," pursued Alwyn. "This bill gives the Borough Street Railway Company the right to use whatever motive power they choose to. It gives them the right to charge five-cent fares without any transfers. In one paragraph there's a clause permitting them to build a subway if they want one. By another paragraph's concessions they can build a conduit and lease it out for telephone or telegraph wires. By another they can do an express business. But all these provisions are as nothing compared to the fact that the bill gives the streets above and below ground to the Borough Company forever and ever—not for a term of years, but until the end of the world. It delivers that route to the company not only

for our time, but for always, and binds us and our descendants to its terms. That is the chief outrage of the whole thing. To think that the——"

"Oh, we've got a howling reformer in the Mayor's chair, have we?" scoffed Horrigan. "If I'd known that——"

"The people have got a man who is trying to protect their rights and property. Here's a letter I received to-day. You'll recognize the name of the capitalist who wrote it. You know he is honest as well as wise. This is his proposition: He will pay $2,000,000 for that same franchise, give the city 10 per cent. of the gross receipts and turn over the whole plant to it at the end of fifty years. What do you think of that?"

"It's a fake."

"It is a bona-fide offer. He volunteers to deposit $1,000,000 to bind the bargain. Now, what I want to ask you, Mr. Horrigan, is this: If the franchise is worth $2,000,000, why are you and your faction in the Board of Aldermen so anxious to give it away for nothing?"

"Look here!" blustered the Boss. "I——"

"I am looking," retorted Bennett; "I've been looking deeper into it than you realize. I asked you a question just now. I'll answer it myself in one word: 'Graft!' That is why you

want to give away a franchise that is worth $2,000,000."

"Graft!" snorted Horrigan contemptuously. "The same old reformer howl! What's your idea of graft, anyway?"

"Graft is unearned increment. Money to which the recipient has no legal or moral right. That is——"

"So! Then show me the man who ain't a grafter! A lawyer shows his client how to evade the law, and he takes a fee for doing it. What's that but graft? A magazine takes pay for printing an advertisement its editors know is a fake. What's that? Graft! When a Congressman votes for an appropriation because another Congressman has agreed to vote for one of his, what's that? Graft! When a five-thousand-a-year Senator retires at the end of ten years worth a million, what's that? Graft! A police captain on $2,750 a year buys yachts and country estates. Graft! How about the railroad president who gets stock free in a corporation that ships over his road? Or the insurance man or banker who gives or takes fat loans on fancy securities and clears 1,000 per cent.? Grafters, all of 'em! Grafters! Every one grafts who can or who isn't too stupid. Show me a man who doesn't graft

and I'll show you a fool! Present company not excepted."

"That's where you're wrong," returned Alwyn, ignoring the slur and speaking with a judicial quiet oddly at contrast with the Boss's vehemence. "The man who said 'Honesty is the best policy' knew what he was talking about. It pays best not only hereafter but here as well. Why did Missouri choose Folk for Governor? Because, in spite of his faults, he is honest. Why was La Follette sent to the Senate from Wisconsin? Because, faults and all, he was honest. Why did the people of this country make Roosevelt their President? Were they blind to his faults and foibles? No; but they knew he was honest! I am honest. This bill isn't. That is why I won't sign it."

"You won't, eh?" roared Horrigan. "Then veto it! Veto it, if you dare. I'll not only smash your political career, but I'll pass the bill over your veto. That'll show you pretty well how you and me stand as to power in this city. I'll make you the laughing-stock of the administration by taking the whole thing out of your hands and passing it in spite of you."

"I doubt it," answered Bennett, paling, but meeting coolly the fiery wrath in Horrigan's little red eyes. "I intend to fight your Borough bill in the Aldermanic Council and out-

side that Council. To pass a bill over my veto you'll have to get a two-thirds majority. That means fourteen votes. You have only your 'solid thirteen.' And I'll make it my business to see you don't get a fourteenth vote."

"I'll look out for that, all right, all right!"

"One thing more, Mr. Horrigan. I have reason to believe there is bribery in this matter. I'll ferret out the name of every man who gives or takes a bribe in connection with the Borough Franchise bill, and I'll send every one of them to jail. Not only the Aldermen, but the capitalists who are behind the measure. Receiver and thief shall go to jail together."

"Is that so?" chuckled Horrigan. "Then, Mr. Reformer, let me tell you who is really behind this whole affair—the man you'll have to jail first of all—Mr. Charles Wainwright, uncle of the girl you're trying to marry!"

He leaned back to note the effect of his revelation. But Bennett's face moved no muscle, gave no hint of what lay beneath.

"Besides," went on Horrigan, eager to press his advantage, "every cent of Miss Wainwright's fortune and of her brother's has been put by Wainwright into Borough stock. If the franchise is beaten that stock will collapse, and Miss Wainwright will be a pauper. You'll beggar the girl you're in love with and her

young brother if you veto that bill. Now go ahead and do as you like."

It was Horrigan's trump card and he had played it well. White, silent, Bennett walked back to his desk. The fight seemed all knocked out of him. Heavily he moved, like a man over-exhausted. Picking up a pen, he wrote rapidly, then cast aside the pen, crossed to the window and looked out into the snowy, crowded park.

"You've signed the bill?" cried Horrigan in delight.

"I've vetoed it!" replied Bennett.

CHAPTER VII.

A BROKEN PROMISE.

"THE Boss is turned down!"

This startling news flew, lightning fast, to every quarter of the organization, and in its wake spread a trail of incredulous amaze. Every member, from Alderman to "heeler," knew why Horrigan had made Bennett, Mayor. That the latter should turn against his benefactor seemed not only black ingratitude, but something akin to insanity. For it apparently spelled political suicide for the young man.

While neither of the disputants had repeated the details of the quarrel, yet those details with many another were already passing from mouth to mouth in the mysterious fashion whereby the closest kept secrets are divulged and enlarged on. In the financial world, too, the veto came as a bombshell. Borough Street Railway stock fell with a thud that shook more than one colossal fortune. Bennett—central point of the whole upheaval—was the calmest

man of all who were involved. He had chosen his course and he was following it with a dogged quiet far more dangerous than any loud-mouthed bluster. He had laid out a campaign and that campaign he rigidly followed.

His first step was to send for Perry Wainwright early on the morning following the clash with Horrigan, and, under strict pledge of secrecy, to explain the whole complicated affair to that very bewildered young man.

"You're all right, Alwyn! You're all the goods!" crowed Perry in genuine admiration. "But why didn't you back-heel Horrigan and throw him downstairs?"

"I think I did," said Bennett, dryly. "I think I'm still doing it. That's why I sent for you to-day."

"Want me to lick him for you?" asked Perry in delight. "He's a bit over my weight, but I wouldn't mind pasting——"

"No," interrupted Bennett, amused at the lad's vehemence; "I want you to play the melodramatic brother and protect your sister."

"Say!" snorted Perry, all the lightness gone out of his manner and his young frame stiffening ominously. "D'you mean to say the cur is framing up any game on Dallas? I——"

"Sit down!" ordered Alwyn, "and try to use what little human intelligence you may have.

I've got to have your help, and what use are you when all you can think of is getting thrashed by somebody? Sit down now and listen to me."

Perry meekly obeyed the new note of command in his friend's voice, and Bennett resumed:

"Your uncle has tried to hamper me by putting all your fortune and Dallas's into Borough Street Railway stock. The news of my veto will reach the Exchange almost at once. That will cause a slump in Borough stock. If Horrigan fails to carry the bill through over my head—and he will fail if I can possibly block him—that will mean the practical collapse of the stock. It will mean that you and Dallas will be almost penniless."

"Well," suggested Perry cheerfully, "then you can marry Dallas, and little brother Perry can come and live with you. Don't worry, old chap! I——"

"Shut up, you young idiot, and sit down and listen! Here's a check. Also a note of introduction to my broker. He's a close-mouthed fellow and he'll keep the secret. I want you to sell Borough stock short to the amount of——"

"To speculate? Gee! I never thought——"

"I don't believe in speculation as a rule, but

this time it's the only way out. Sell short; then if the bill is defeated, you and Dallas will still be as well off as you are now, even after paying me back this sum I've advanced. If the bill is passed over my head, the stock will boom, and you'll both be richer than ever. Understand the idea? I think I've arranged it so you and she won't lose a dollar in either case."

"Alwyn!" cried Perry, the full idea at last penetrating his youthful brain, "you're the whitest ever! The——"

"Hold on! I do this on one condition."

"Oh!"

"On condition you promise solemnly that neither Dallas nor any one else shall know my share in it."

"But——"

"Promise!"

"Oh, well! All right, then. But Dallas ought to——"

"No, she oughtn't. Now clear out. I'm busy. Don't waste any time going to my broker. I'm holding back the official announcement of the veto as long as I can. But——"

"I'm on! So long, old chap! Enter Perry the Lamb into Bear-and-Bullville! Let Horrigan & Co. indulge in a timely tremble!"

Scarce had Perry departed on his mission when Phelan was announced.

"Your Honor!" he shouted as he first caught a glimpse of Bennett, "you're all aces! Nothin' to it. Friend Horrigan's bitin' holes in the ceilin'. He's—oh, you needn't look so mum. I'm wise. I haven't spent ten years and close on a million bucks in scrapin' together a private secret service system for nothin'! 'You've signed the bill?' squeals Horrigan. 'No, you big stiff,' says you, 'I've vetoed it. Now, go chase yerself before I knock you from under your hat!' says you. Them was the very words, so I'm told."

"I congratulate you on your secret service men!" laughed Bennett. "They seem to have a wonderful faculty for quoting one's remarks literally. But——"

"But did I come here to ladle out hot air to you?" supplemented Phelan. "No, I didn't. I come to tip you off to a meetin' that's held last night at Wainwright's house. Him an' Horrigan an' Gibbs an' some others, incloodin' Hen Williams, who's Horrigan's mouthpiece an' handy-man in the Board of Alderman. Didn't happen to hear of that meetin', did you?"

"No. I am unfortunate in having no secret service corps."

"Never mind," returned Phelan, on whom the satire of the reply was quite lost. "You can get the benefit of mine. Now, at this meetin' they did a lot of jabberin', and they cussed you up hill and down dale. Says Horrigan: 'If that young cub——' "

"Thanks!" interposed Alwyn; "but I don't care to hear what was said about me. I——"

"All right, then. But there's something you do want to hear: They got busy at last an' framed up a new wordin' for the Borough bill that'll maybe throw dust in your eyes if you ain't put on to it in advance. They've cut out the subway paragraph, an' the express business clause, an' they allow transfers at all crosslines. That's the way they'll put the bill up to the Aldermen next time. A nice, harmless-lookin' document it'll be, an' perhaps the Board'll swallow it, if——"

"But do the alterations in the bill also eliminate the 'perpetual franchise' clause?"

"Ah, there's the point. They don't. All the other things you kicked against have been wiped out, but that 'perpetual franchise' clause stands."

"And the $2,000,000 cash offer stands, too," added Bennett. "I still fail to see why I should present Mr. Wainwright's company with a franchise for which another man is willing to

pay the city $2,000,000. And I shall fight the bill to the very end."

"Good boy, Your Honor! An' Jimmy Phelan's with you. We'll make Horrigan look like——"

"He needs fourteen votes to carry the bill past my veto. He has his thirteen Aldermen under Williams's lead. But only those thirteen voted for the bill in its original state. Unless Horrigan and Williams can find a fourteenth Alderman to——"

"Unless one of the men who voted against it before can be bought to vote for it next time, Horrigan loses," answered Phelan. "He'll make it his business to buy a fourteenth man, an' I'll make it my business to find out who he tries to get and to help Your Honor keep that same fourteenth man straight. That's how it adds up so far. Well, I'll be joggin'. I'll keep you posted, an' between us we'll make Horrigan give a livin' picture imitation of a man without a scalp before we're through with him."

Little of Phelan's exultation was reflected in the new Mayor's face as the Alderman bustled out. His duty lay clear before him, and that duty he would follow. But he alone realized the cost. He had so counted on the promised talk with Dallas Wainwright the pre-

ceding evening. On the hopes of that interview he had staked his all. In it he was to have received the half-pledged reward for his months of toil and achievement.

Yet, in view of his present relations toward Wainwright, he could not, of course, visit the financier's home. The doors of the house that contained the woman he loved had been barred to him. And Dallas—what must she have thought of his failure to call?

CHAPTER VIII.

AT THE BALL.

"I've found out who their 'fourteenth man' is, Your Honor," whispered Phelan in high excitement. "It's Roberts—Richard P. Roberts, of the Third. He's the Alderman that Horrigan's trying to put the Indian sign on. We've got to nail him if we can."

"You're sure it's Roberts?" asked Bennett in the same undertone.

The Administration Ball was in full swing. Mayor and Alderman had chanced to meet for a moment in a big, crowded reception foyer, just off the ballroom.

"Am I sure it's Roberts?" echoed Phelan. "Am I sure? Might as well ask me am I sure Chesty Dick Horrigan is crooked. I've got the facts down straight. Them secret service chaps of mine——"

"If they get Roberts they will be able to pass the bill——"

"They ain't goin' to get him if Jimmy Phelan's hand don't turn out to be all deuces an' trays. An'——"

"Keep an eye on him and don't let him go away without my knowing it. I must see him to-night and learn positively how he stands in regard to the matter. He has a reputation for being honest. If only——"

"Here's Alwyn, Mrs. Bennett," came Perry Wainwright's voice from the doorway. "In here. Say, Your Honor, your honorable Honor's honored mother has been looking everywhere for you. And now that I've reunited the long-lost Mayor and his anxious mamma I'll chase off and find my partner for the next waltz. I wish it was Cynthia. Ever dance with Cynthia, Alwyn? Poetry of motion and all that. Like a swan or—or a—— Oh, good-evening, Alderman. I didn't see you. Are you dancing to-night?"

"Dancin'?" repeated Phelan in high disgust. "Do I look it? It's bad enough to be harnessed into this open-faced suit that feels like I was goin' to slip through it every minute, without tryin' to dance, too. At a show of this kind I feel like a pair of yellow shoes at a fun'ral. So long, Your Honor. Even', Mrs. Bennett! There's the music startin', son," he added to Perry, as he started for the barroom.

"I heard it," said the lad; "but I'm in no wild hurry."

"Thought you said you had a partner to look up."

"I have—one of Judge Newman's daughters. Ever see her? I thought not, or you wouldn't have wondered why I wasn't in a hurry. Better late than——"

"Are you having a good time, mother?" Bennett was asking the little old lady as he found a seat for her.

"Yes," she answered. "Aren't you?"

"Of course I am. Why do you ask?"

The foyer was thinning out as people trooped to the ballroom. For the moment mother and son were alone together.

"You aren't having a good time, Alwyn," she contradicted gently. "You're unhappy about something. Tell me."

"Nonsense!" he denied, with a forced laugh. "I——"

"You are thinking of Dallas, my boy. Is anything wrong between you and her? What has happened?"

"Nothing," he answered sullenly. But the mother was not content. Her heart ached for the grief her son was trying to hide.

"Something has happened, Alwyn," she declared, "and I want to know what, so that I

can help you. You love her, and that day she came back from Europe I felt sure she loved you. What is holding you two apart?"

"Nothing that can be helped."

"But you never go to see her, or——"

"How can I? You know my attitude toward her uncle. How can I call on her while she is in his house? I exposed his relations toward the Borough Street Railway Franchise bill. I am fighting him and his iniquitous bill with every means in my power. Dallas lives——"

"I hadn't thought of that. You poor boy! But surely——"

"And something more. Her money and Perry's are invested in Borough stock. By beating that bill I seem, outwardly, to be wilfully wrecking their fortune. I told you the plan I arranged with Perry to avert this, but she doesn't know of that. And——"

"Why don't you tell her, then? Or let me tell her?"

"Because it isn't her gratitude I want. I want her to love me."

"But don't you see, in the meantime, what a weapon you are putting into Mr. Wainwright's hands? Suppose he tells Dallas of your enmity to him and lets her know you are seemingly trying to impoverish her and her

brother? He might prejudice her terribly against——"

"I've thought of all that. I must be content to wait. Next Friday the revised Borough bill comes up before the Aldermen again for the final fight. When it's settled one way or the other I can go to her and explain. Meantime——"

"Meantime she is here to-night with Mr. Wainwright. Have you seen her?"

"Only for a minute."

"Did she treat you with the same friendliness—the same interest as of old? Don't think I'm inquisitive, dear. I only ask all these questions because I love you."

"I know," he answered, pressing her hand as it lay on his arm; "yet I can hardly answer you, for I hardly know. In her presence I am not at ease because I can't tell her everything. And she seems ill at ease because she knows there's something I don't tell her. Oh, it's a wretched position for us both!"

"Then why don't you clear it up?"

"By going to her and saying, 'Dallas, I am exposing your uncle as a blackguard and am destroying your fortune and Perry's. Will you marry me?' These are the facts. But thank God it's only till Friday. After that I can go to her and make it all clear."

Before Mrs. Bennett could reply, Perry returned from the ballroom, Cynthia at his side.

"Then why not give me the next one, too?" the lad was pleading. "If one two-step's good, two two-steps are twice as good. Please——"

"But see," expostulated Cynthia, showing him her card. "The next is Mr. Gibbs's. I've told you that twice."

"I wish Gibbs all the luck in the world," observed Perry benevolently, as he deposited Cynthia on a fauteuil beside her chaperon, Mrs. Bennett. "I wish him so much good luck that if he'd slip and break both his legs I'd pay for a cab to take him home."

"Look out! Please!" begged Cynthia. "He's coming!"

"The next is ours, I think, Miss Garrison," said Gibbs, entering from the ballroom with Dallas on his arm. "I hope we'll have better fortune than Miss Wainwright and I. My step doesn't seem to suit hers to-night."

"No, I'm afraid the fault was mine," protested Dallas. "I'm a little tired, I think. May I sit here with you a few minutes, Mrs. Bennett?" she added as Gibbs bore Cynthia away for their dance.

"You don't seem very fond of Mr. Gibbs, Perry," observed Mrs. Bennett, noting young Wainwright's scowl of impotent wrath.

"Not fond enough to make me want to live in the same world with him. Mrs. Bennett, you're too pretty to be just a chaperon. Come and dance this two-step with me. Please do!"

He nodded with vast significance toward Dallas and Bennett, and the little old lady, catching the idea, accepted with alacrity.

"I'm so glad even to get this minute with you," began Alwyn, when he and Dallas were alone. "It's so long since——"

"Since you came to see me? Yes, but that is your fault. Alwyn, why haven't you called since I came home?"

"Don't you know why, Dallas?"

"No."

"Are you certain you don't know?"

"I—I don't know, absolutely," she faltered. "Oh, there are so many things I don't know absolutely."

"What is one of them?"

"For one thing, you and I used to be such good friends, and——"

"That is past," said Alwyn firmly. "There can be no talk of mere friendship between you and me, Dallas. I must be everything or nothing to you. To-night I can't speak as I want to, but I can in a very few days. Trust me till then. You know I am fighting Mr. Wainwright's interests and——"

"Yes," she replied bitterly. "My uncle gives me no chance to forget that."

"Don't think I'm fighting him for my own amusement. I must oppose him or else give up a fight that I set out to win. And I mean to win it!"

"That's the same old fighting spirit I used to try so hard to awaken in you," said Dallas, a faint note of admiration in her rich voice. "I told you once it always took a blow to arouse you. That blow has evidently been struck."

"It has been struck!" he acquiesced, with a ghost of a smile.

She saw the haggard lines about his mouth, the tired look in his eyes, and a lump came into her throat. She leaned forward impulsively; but before she could speak, he had, unknowingly, thrown away the golden moment by continuing:

"I must win this fight, even though it affects others besides Mr. Wainwright. Even if——"

"What others do you mean?"

"Oh, I can't explain now. After Friday I can. On Saturday may I come to see you and tell you everything?"

"Why not now?"

"There are obstacles that——"

"Tell me what they are?" she begged.

"I can't. All I can tell you now is that I love you. I love you above all the world, sweetheart, and——"

But Fate, in the dual guise of Horrigan and Wainwright, intervened. The financier and the Boss, seeking some quiet spot for a chat, strolled through the foyer, where Horrigan, on sight of Bennett, halted with a glower of dislike, which he took no pains to conceal.

CHAPTER IX.

TEMPTATION.

THE moment of strained silence that ensued upon Horrigan's entrance was broken by the irrepressible Perry, who, having rescued Cynthia from Gibbs at the close of their dance, was escorting her triumphantly from the ballroom.

"This is my dance," he remarked happily to Alwyn, as he came up, "and we're going to sit it out. If Mrs. Bennett, in her capacity as chaperon, should ask for Cynthia, you can tell her we're going into the glass-house to stroll among the romantic vegetables."

And he departed with his prize in the direction of the conservatory. The moment's interruption had sufficed for Wainwright to whisper an admonitory word in Horrigan's ear. Dallas, too, fearing a clash, took Bennett's arm.

"It's so warm in here," she murmured. "Perhaps we can find better air in one of the other rooms. Shall we try?"

"Wainwright," exclaimed Horrigan, as the portières closed behind the Mayor and girl, "I don't like that! Is your niece on his side or with us?"

"I don't know," answered Wainwright discontentedly, "and I don't like to force an issue by asking her. It doesn't especially matter, I suppose. In any case, I can trust her."

"You're in luck!" sneered Horrigan. "That makes two people you say you can trust. First your secretary, Thompson, and then—— Hello!" he broke off, as a swarthy, middle-aged man hurried in. "Looking for me, Williams? What's up?"

The newcomer was visibly excited, and at first glance Horrigan had seen that something was amiss.

"What's up!" repeated the Boss.

"Ellis has gone—deserted!" cried Williams.

"Ellis!" echoed Wainwright in dismay; for the man of whom Williams spoke was one of the Aldermanic "solid thirteen" on whom Horrigan counted. The Boss made no comment, but waited impatiently for his henchman to continue.

"Ellis has gone," repeated Williams. "He left a note for me, saying his wife is very ill and the doctor's ordered him to take her South; so he can't attend Friday's meeting."

"Can't attend the meeting?" gasped Wainwright. "But everything depends on——"

"Oh, he'll be on hand—the cur!" growled Horrigan. "The rest are standing solid, of course?"

"I think so," hazarded Williams; "but some of 'em are pretty scared. We've never had such a fight before as Bennett's putting up against us now, and——"

"I'll strengthen 'em up so as to knock out any weakening!" declared Horrigan confidently. "It's Ellis we've got to look after now. Go after him, Williams, on the first train South and haul him back. Have him here by Friday, if you have to kidnap him. I'll stand for any damage or expense. Only see he's here for that meeting. It's up to you. Now jump!"

As Williams hastened toward the door, Horrigan called after him:

"On your way out send word to Roberts that I want to see him here. Well, Wainwright," he resumed, turning back into the room, "it looks bad."

"Do you think——"

"I think we're in a tight place. If our Aldermen found out about Ellis's quitting, there's no knowing how many of 'em would bolt! If we could only work Bennett!"

"Out of the question! He can't be turned."

"There's no man who can't be turned. I've one card up my sleeve yet that ought to land him. But I'd rather try something else first. I wish we could get a line on his price."

"He can't be bought! He——"

"Rot! Everybody can be bought. Only there's some that can't be bought with cash. I'm wondering what there is that'll buy him if money won't."

Gibbs, in search of an elusive partner, crossed the foyer and paused to greet them.

"What news?" he asked.

Wainwright surveyed the broker's well-groomed figure with less approval than usual.

"You seem to be industrious enough to-night," said he. "It's a pity some of to-night's dancing energy couldn't have been devoted to your work this morning."

Gibbs flushed at the reproof in words and tone.

"I don't understand," he replied stiffly.

"Why didn't you notify me of the big block of Borough stock that was bought up just before noon?"

"I hadn't heard about it," answered Gibbs, with not quite all his customary assurance.

"Everybody else heard of it. You'll have to keep better tabs on the market than that if

you're to be any use to us. Do you know who bought it?"

"No," returned Gibbs, with growing uneasiness; "of course I don't. How should I know? What are you driving at?"

"This is what I'm driving at: Several big blocks of the stock have been unloaded on the market during the past few days and have been quietly snapped up. Somebody's evidently tailing on to our game. You don't know who?"

"I've told you twice that I didn't know," blustered Gibbs, masking his concern under a show of virtuous indignation.

The effort called forth all the astute young broker's nerve. For a certain shrewd scheme of his showed signs of falling through. By his original arrangement with Wainwright he was to have manipulated all the Borough stock purchases on the Exchange floor and to receive 20 per cent. of the profits on the condition that he invest not one dollar in the stock on his private account.

Having strong faith in the deal's success and having no equally strong incentive to keep faith with his partner, Gibbs had sought to swell his own profits by secretly buying up quantities of the stock for himself, until every penny of his capital was involved. His troubled mind could not now determine whether or not Wain-

wright suspected him. Gibbs, while possessing all the ambition, selfishness and lack of conscience that go toward the making of a great financier, lacked the one chief essential for the part—namely, a cold and unshakable nerve. It was this defect that now threatened to expose him.

"Well," resumed Wainwright, as though dismissing the topic, "you should have made it your business to know who is doing this private buying. That's what we brought you into the deal for. Anyhow, the mysterious purchaser is liable to find himself in hot water before long."

"Why?" queried Gibbs, in a voice he tried to make indifferent.

"Only because the deal will probably fall through."

"Fall through!" cried Gibbs in dismay. "What do you—— Why, you told me Mr. Horrigan could win over a fourteenth Alderman and that with his solid thirteen——"

"Yes," drawled Horrigan, who had been unobtrusively eyeing Gibbs from the moment of his entrance, "we had some such notion, as you say. But my 'solid thirteen' didn't happen to be as solid as he looked. He's bolted."

"Bolted! Then we—we will lose! We——"

"Say, Mr. Gibbs," observed Horrigan, "you

seem to take this thing pretty hard for a man with only 20 per cent. at stake. Mr. Wainwright stands to lose some millions. I'm interested to the extent of almost a million. Yet you don't see us getting pale and shaky, do you? If a man can't pay for the chips, he has no right in a poker game. We haven't lost yet. I've sent after the fellow that bolted, and I think I can land the fourteenth Alderman, too."

"Good!" exclaimed Gibbs in wild relief; "and you'll do your very best to pull the deal through, won't you?"

"No!" snarled Horrigan in elephantine sarcasm; "I'm going to spend the time playing ping-pong and diabolo with the kids, or taking a course of lessons in fancy knitting. Oh, buck up, can't you, and quit acting like a baby! Judge Newman's out there on the other side of the ballroom. Chase over and tell him to come here."

Too confused to resent the Boss's words, Gibbs meekly set out on his errand.

"That chap's got a streak of yellow a yard wide," commented Horrigan, gazing after him.

"Not as bad as that," replied Wainwright. "He's young and not used to reverses. You'll find he's game, all right, when it comes to a pinch. What did you want of Newman?"

"You'll see. Here he comes."

"You wished to speak to me, Mr. Horrigan?" piped the little Judge, hurrying into the foyer. "Good-evening, Mr. Wainwright. What a success this ball is! My daughters have been dancing all evening. Mrs. Newman is so——"

"Never mind Mrs. Newman just now," broke in Horrigan. "There's something I want you to do for me."

He spoke, as he always did to Newman, in the manner of one addressing an incompetent servant. The Judge, for all his pomposity, deemed it wise to ignore the politician's mode of address.

"I want you to hunt up Bennett," went on the Boss, "and persuade him to stop fighting the Borough Franchise bill. Tell him——"

"Oh!" gasped the Judge in genuine alarm. "I really don't think I could presume to——"

"Yes, you can," contradicted Horrigan. "You can do it, and what's more, you will. You don't feel shy about asking favors of me, and when it's the other way around you've got to come down or——"

"I know! I know!" protested the frightened little Judge, soothingly. "But you don't understand how——"

"I got you the nomination last fall. Are you going to be a white man or a welcher?"

"But I'm sure that Mrs. Newman——"

"To blazes with Mrs. Newman! Now listen to me. Go to Bennett and do what you can to make him keep his hands off our Borough bill. If he's difficult offer him, in my name, the nomination for Governor next year. If you can get him, well—there's a vacancy next year in the Supreme Court and——"

"I'll do what I can," assented the Judge. "I'm sure you are right, Mr. Horrigan, even if your way of putting matters is just a little rugged. I'll see Mr. Bennett to-night and use all the persuasion in my power. I'm quite sure civic welfare will be best served if he will cease his unseemly opposition to the Borough bill. Thank you, Mr. Horrigan. I'm sure Mrs. Newman——"

"I'm sure, too," cut in Horrigan. "Now run on. We're busy. Remember, now—the next Supreme Court vacancy——"

"Do you really think he has any influence with Bennett?" asked Wainwright as the Judge vanished.

"Can't do any harm to try. They're neighbors in the country and in the same crowd in society, and all that. If it fails, I've another card that's even stronger. Roberts ought to be

here by now. You found out about those notes of his?"

"Yes, both of them. One for $7,000, one for $15,000. Both secured by mortgaging his factory. Roberts can't meet them. They've been extended twice, though the security must have been good or the Sturtevant Trust Company wouldn't have lent——"

"Williams said you wanted to speak to me, Mr. Horrigan," said a nervous voice from the door, and a pale, middle-aged man came forward. He wore worry's stamp between his perplexed eyes and care had bent his narrow shoulders.

"Yes. Good-evening, Roberts," replied Horrigan cordially. "See you later, Wainwright."

The financier took the hint and walked toward the ballroom, on his way out nearly colliding with Phelan, who was entering the foyer. At sight of Horrigan and Roberts together, Phelan's eyebrows went upward with a jerk, and he tiptoed out in the opposite direction, as fast as his stout legs could carry him, in search of Bennett. Meantime Horrigan had come directly to the point, as usual, in his appeal to Roberts.

"Look here, Alderman," said he, "you've

been trying for years to get through a park bill for your ward. Still want it?"

"Yes," returned Roberts. "My constituents are at me all the time about that park. They——"

"It would make your ward's property values go up 50 per cent., and it would make you solid there forever, hey?"

"Yes; but——"

"Introduce that bill again and I'll guarantee it will go through."

"Are you in earnest?"

"There's my hand on it. Only, of course, it's understood that your park bill won't come up until after the Borough Street Railway Franchise is passed. Understand?"

"I'm afraid I do," said Roberts after a pause; "but I voted against that bill, and——"

"You voted against the bill in its original form," Horrigan interrupted, reassuringly, "and you were right to. It had a lot of clauses that you thought weren't square. But all those have been cut out."

"But I still——"

"But you'll be doing what's best for your own constituents by looking after their interests in the matter of the park. You'll be their hero for that. Of course if I wanted to put it another way I could remind you that your

business is in a bad way and that a friend of mine has bought up your notes at the Sturtevant Trust Company and means to send them to you to-morrow. But that has nothing to do with the case. So I just——"

"I'm honest, Mr. Horrigan," faltered Roberts. "I——"

"Sure you're honest! That's why you'll have the courage to vote for the bill when you see it's been amended so as to be a good thing for the city. That's being honest, isn't it?"

"I—I suppose so. And the notes—the——"

"They'll be sent you by registered mail to-morrow, if you want them. Do you?"

"Y-yes—that is, I——"

"That's settled, then. You've got a level head. Good-night."

The Boss strode out, a grim smile of victory on his big face, leaving Roberts standing confused, doubtful, his brain awhirl. How long the tempted Alderman stood thus—oblivious to the music, his surroundings and all else—he could never remember. But a voice at his elbow brought him to his senses with a start, that was followed by a thrill of fear as he wheeled and recognized the speaker.

CHAPTER X.

"BACK FROM THE DEAD."

ROBERTS'S eyes rested on the grinning, complacent features of Alderman Phelan. At the latter's side was Bennett.

"I was saying," remarked Phelan blandly, "that it's a fine ball. Isn't it, now, Roberts?"

"Yes," said Roberts hastily, preparing to move away. But Phelan buttonholed him.

"Stay an' swap talk awhile with His Honor and me, Roberts," he begged.

"I'm in a hurry," began Roberts, "and——"

"Alderman Phelan has been trying to cheer me up a bit," said Bennett. "He knows I'm worried about the Borough bill's outcome. I wish Friday was past."

"Same here," chimed in Phelan. "An' you, Roberts?"

"I?" muttered the uncomfortable man. "Why?"

"It's Friday that the Borough bill comes up again," explained Bennett, as though impart-

ing new information. "You are still against it, of course, Mr. Roberts?"

"I'm not sure—you see, it's been altered so as to——"

"The alterations don't affect the main issue and they can't change any honest man's views. So I can count on you to continue opposing it, can't I?"

"I object to this catechizing!" flared up poor Roberts. "I won't stand for it. I'm my own master and——"

"Are you sure you're your own master?" demanded Bennett. "If so, why should you be afraid to say how you are going to vote?"

"Do you accuse me of——"

"I accuse you of having changed your mind about the bill for some reason that won't bear the light. And I warn you to go carefully. Somebody's going to prison before this matter's ended."

"I'm not answerable to any one but my constituents," said Roberts. with a pitiful attempt at cold dignity; "and they——"

"And they shall demand an answer from you," warned Bennett. "I'll see to it that they do. Now, you can go if you want to," turning his back on the confused Roberts, who eagerly took the opportunity to escape.

"I'm afraid friend Roberts ain't havin' the

happiest time of his life to-night," remarked Phelan, going to the doorway and looking after the departing Alderman. "There's not much of what the poet-geezer calls 'Whoop up the dance, let joy be unrefined' about him. Poor fool! He never was cut out to be a crook. He makes a punk job of it, in spite of the trimmin's Horrigan's dec'rated him with. If I hadn't the sense to be crooked without makin' a monkey of myself, I'm blest if I don't b'lieve I'd turn honest. Hey? Here's a couple of folks, though, that's gettin' more fun out of the ball than ever I had at a dog fight."

As he spoke, Perry Wainwright piloted Cynthia in from the conservatory at top speed, his jolly young face alight with a joy that reflected itself in Miss Garrison's own very flushed countenance.

"Alwyn!" shouted young Wainwright, not seeing Phelan in his excitement, "guess what's happened! I'll give you three guesses and——"

"And I can't possibly guess if you gave me a thousand," retorted Bennett with vast gravity. "So I won't try. I'll just congratulate you with all my heart, old chap, and wish Miss Garrison every happiness that——"

"Gee! how'd you know? We haven't told a soul. It only happened about four minutes

ago. I was telling Cynthia what a daisy little girl she was and she said she thought I was pretty nice, too, and so I got brave and said, 'Then why don't you——' "

"Perry!" reproved Cynthia sternly, jerking his arm to show that Phelan as well as Alwyn was recipient of the highly intimate tidings.

"Oh, don't mind me, children!" put in Phelan. "I'm used to it. I was young myself once, so I've been told, though I don't clearly remember it myself. Can I butt in with a line of congratulation?"

He extended his big hand with an honest cordiality that quite won Cynthia.

"Thanks, Alderman," grinned Perry effusively. "Now, Alwyn, we've got to go and break it to your mother if we can find her. Come along and back us up."

Dragging Bennett between them, the two youngsters started off on their quest. Phelan was about to return to his beloved bar when he was checked by seeing in the opposite doorway a man who stood as though petrified, watching Cynthia Garrison's departing form. The intruder was about to withdraw when Phelan hailed him.

"Good-evening," called the Alderman.

"Good-evening, sir," said the newcomer, re-

spectfully pausing on the point of leaving the foyer.

"I've met you before, I think," went on Phelan.

"Some days ago in the Mayor's office," assented the other. "I am Thompson, Mr. Wainwright's private secretary."

"I'm Alderman Phelan, of the Eighth. And I've seen you before we met at His Honor's."

"So you said then, sir. But you were mistaken. Good-evening."

He turned again toward the door, but Phelan resumed, without seeking to stop him:

"A mistake was it? I'm not a man who makes many mistakes, Mr. Garrison."

The retreating secretary halted as though struck.

"That is another mistake, sir," he said in a muffled voice. "My name is Thompson."

"Is it though?" inquired Phelan innocently. "It's queer how I could get mixed up so. When I was Chief of Police there was a bank president named Garrison who shot himself after bein' swindled an' whipsawed by a financier who was his dearest friend. He left a little daughter, Miss Cynthia, who you was lookin' at so keen just now, an' a son, who disappeared. That was nine years ago, an' I only saw the boy once, so maybe I've over-

played my hand in pipin' you off for him. But," added Phelan, laying a strong, detaining hand on Thompson's shoulder, "here comes some one who can clear it up easy enough."

The secretary twisted in the iron grasp and sought vainly to break away as Cynthia and Perry entered.

"Cynthia's lost her fan," explained Perry at sight of the Alderman. "She's had me looking all over for the measly thing. Wait here a minute," he added to her, "and I'll chase into the conservatory and see if we left it there."

And depositing the girl in a chair, he bolted away in search of the missing article.

"Now, then, young man," said Phelan, "if your name's Thompson, as you say, there's no reason why you should object to my introducin' you to this young lady. Step up, son."

Still holding the reluctant, struggling secretary by the shoulder, Phelan turned to Cynthia.

"Miss Garrison," said he, "here's a gentleman I think you know. Would you mind lookin' him over?"

Wondering at the odd request, Cynthia raised her eyes to the stranger. But the latter persistently kept his face averted.

"I don't think I know him," she answered

doubtfully. "There is something familiar about——"

The secretary shifted restlessly, unconsciously bringing his profile into her range of vision. With a gasp Cynthia sprang to her feet, her face white, her eyes wide and incredulous.

"It's not—it's—oh, Harry!" she cried in an ecstasy of recognition, flinging her arms about the secretary's neck. "Harry! Brother! Back from the dead! Don't you know me? It's Cynthia! Don't——"

"I am afraid you've made a very strange blunder, Miss Garrison," returned the secretary, his voice hoarse and tremulous. "My name is——"

"Your name's Harry Garrison!" Phelan shouted. "What's the use of lyin' to your own sister? I give you credit for havin' good reasons for callin' yourself Thompson, an' I think I begin to see what them reasons are. But when it comes to denyin' your own sister, you're playin' it down low, whatever your game may be, an' I've a good mind to——"

"Harry!" the girl was pleading, "you do know me! After all these nine lonely years have you no greeting for me? Every night I've prayed that God would bring you back to me. And now——"

The secretary's pallid, expressionless mask

of a face broke in a flash into a look of infinite love and yearning. With a single gesture he gathered Cynthia's fragile body in his arms and crushed her against his breast.

"Oh, my little sister!" he murmured, a great sob choking his words. "My little, little sister!"

Phelan cleared his throat and coughed savagely to express his contempt for the mist that sprang into his own hard old eyes. The sound recalled the secretary to himself.

"You've trapped me into this," he exclaimed, with a laugh that was half a groan, "and you must both promise not to betray my secret. It won't be much longer now, thank God! But you'll both promise, won't you?"

"Sure!" assented Phelan.

"And you, too, Cynthia?" pleaded her brother; "you can trust me, can't you?"

"Of course I can. If you insist, I won't tell any one. I——"

"I'm happier this minute than I've ever been in all my whole life!" smiled the secretary, again clasping his sister in his arms. "If you only knew, little girl, how I've longed for this!"

"Here's the fan!" announced Perry, hurrying around the corner of the doorway. "Found it under a——"

He stopped short, open-mouthed, dumb and motionless. Thompson and Cynthia stood, in close embrace, before him, with Phelan looking on like some obese caricature of a benevolent fairy.

The fan slipped from young Wainwright's nerveless grip, and fell with a clatter to the polished floor, its ivory sticks snapping like icicles.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CRUCIAL TEST.

At sound of the breaking fan, all three participants in the strange reunion turned. For a second or more they faced the crimson-faced dumfounded Perry without a word. Here was an element in the affair on which neither Phelan nor Cynthia had counted when giving Thompson their promise not to reveal his identity. They gradually realized this, and it left even the ready-witted Phelan speechless.

Perry himself was first to break the spell.

"Well," he observed, with an assumption of airy scorn that was meant to be annihilating. "You all seem quite happy. Don't mind me! I'm sorry to butt in on this cute little love fest, but I left a fiancée here. Perhaps one of you can explain what's happened to her since I——"

"Oh, Perry!" exclaimed Cynthia, "don't be silly. I'll tell you all about it some time. It is——"

"Some time?" yelled Perry, rage battering down his attempt at sarcasm. "Some time! Maybe it might be just as well if you did condescend to explain. Here you promise to marry me, and ten minutes later I find you in a catch-as-catch-can hug with this ugly little shrimp; and Phelan looking on as happy as if he'd eaten a canary! And then you've the gall to tell me you'll explain 'some time'!"

He glared at Cynthia in all the majesty of outraged devotion, only to surprise on that young lady's face a look that indicated a violent struggle with the desire to laugh.

"This is funny all right—I guess not!" he snapped. "Cynthia, you've mauled and smashed a loving heart and I'll make a hit with myself by forgiving you. But as for you," wheeling about and thrusting his furious face to within three inches of Thompson's immobile countenance—"as for you, I'm going to do all sorts of things to you the moment Miss Garrison will have the kindness to sasshay out of the room. Your sorrowing relatives will have all manner of fun sorting you out when I've finished with you! Steal my sweetheart, would you, not ten minutes after I'd——"

"There!" interposed Phelan, shoving his powerful bulk good-naturedly between the two younger men and linking his arm in Perry's.

"Now you've got quite a bunch of hot words off your chest an' you'll be in better shape to hear sense. Ain't you just a little bit ashamed?"

"Ashamed?" sputtered Perry. "Who? I? Well, that——"

"Yes, you, youngster. And if you holler like that in comp'ny I'll sure be forced to wind up by spankin' you. Now, stand off there—no, over there where you can see Miss Garrison—an' listen to me. So! Now, first of all, did you happen to be in love with this young lady?"

"It's none of your measly business. But I did."

"Why did you ask her to hitch up with you for keeps?"

"Because I loved her and——"

"Because you had a lot of faith in her, too, hey?" persisted the Alderman.

"Yes, and a nice way she's——"

"Pretty girl, too!" mused Phelan, as if to himself. "In my young days if I could 'a' got a little beauty like that to sign articles with me I'd 'a' thought I was the original Lucky Jim. I'd——"

"So did I!" interrupted Perry hotly. "I——"

But Phelan was continuing in the same abstract monologue:

"And if I could 'a' seen from her eyes (like any dough-head could see from Miss Garrison's) that she had a heart as big as a watermelon an' as true as a Bible text, an' as warm as a happy man's hearth-fire—well, if I'd seen all that, an' got wise to the gorgeous news that that same heart was just chock-a-block full of love for my own ornery, cheap-skate self, I'd 'a' flopped down on both knees and sent up a bunch of prayers to be allowed to go on dreamin', an' never, never wake up."

Phelan paused. This time Perry did not break in, and the half-audible monologue continued:

"I'd have had the sense to know that a girl with eyes like those couldn't be a flirt an' couldn't double-cross the man she loved if her life depended on her doin' it. I'd 'a' licked any guy that said she could, an' if I'd seen her kissin' another man I'd 'a' punched myself on the jaw and called myself a liar. That's what Jimmy Phelan, of the Eighth, would 'a' done. An'——"

"Say!" broke in Perry in a curiously subdued voice, "these eyes of mine do funny things sometimes. I'll bet nine dollars they played a joke on me just now. And even if they didn't, I don't believe 'em. Cynthia, I'm dead-stuck on you! You're all right, even if you did hap-

pen to be acting a trifle eccentric a few minutes ago. You can explain or not, as you like. If you'll just say you love me, that's ace-high with yours truly."

He slipped an arm about her waist as he spoke, awkwardly seeking to atone for his recent anger. The secretary looked at them for an instant, then said briefly:

"You can tell him, Cynthia. He's a good fellow. Come on, Alderman. I think you and I still have something to say to each other."

Cynthia and Perry drifted away toward the conservatory again, quite oblivious of the others, while Phelan and the secretary made their way to a deserted alcove off the ballroom.

* * * * * *

"I've been looking all over for you, Mr. Bennett," called Judge Newman, hurrying out through the chain of anterooms, as Alwyn wandered out of the ballroom into the foyer, a few moments later.

"Anything important?" asked Bennett, pausing in his stroll and greeting the older man cordially. He had known the Judge as long as he could remember and had always had a decided liking for the pompous, henpecked little dignitary. Surrounded as he was by political intrigue, heartache and association with rogues, the harassed young man rather wel-

comed the variety promised by a chat with this old friend of his boyhood.

"Anything important, Judge?" he repeated, "or are you just taking pity on a lonely chap and giving him a chance to chat with you over old times?"

"Well," began the Judge, his customary air of pompous nervousness tinged by an almost conciliatory manner, "I would like to have a little business talk with you, if you don't mind discussing work at a ball."

"Not at all. I've had the honor of dancing with three of your daughters this evening, and the least I can do is to repay such pleasure by——"

"Did you, really?" beamed the Judge, on whom the unmarried state of his four fast-aging girls rested heavily. "I'm sure Mrs. Newman will be pleased. But this business matter. You—you won't misunderstand me——"

"Of course not!" replied Alwyn heartily. "You and I are too old friends, Judge, to——"

"I hope so, I hope so," conceded Newman, with growing anxiety in his tone. "You see——"

"I see you have some trouble coming to the point," said Alwyn, pitying the Judge's evident discomfiture, "and I'm sorry you feel so.

You were my father's friend and I like to think of you as one of my own best friends. There surely should be no hesitation in asking anything in my power to grant."

Thus emboldened, Newman blurted out:

"I—we—that is, it seems to me you have been a little hard upon this Borough Franchise bill, if you don't mind my saying so, Bennett. Couldn't you let up on them now?"

"Why, no, Judge, I can't," replied Bennett, still failing to connect Newman with the Wainwright-Horrigan clique, and attributing the Judge's interest in the matter to an amateur's love of dabbling in politics. "I can't let up on that fight," he continued. "All perpetual franchises are wrong, and this particular franchise bill is rotten to the core. In sheer justice to my oath of office I must fight it."

"My boy," said the Judge in a fatherly manner that he had often found successful in argument, "I was in politics long before you were born and I'm speaking for your own good when I say I deeply regret the stand you've taken in this matter. You objected to the bill in its original form. Almost every change you demanded has been made in it. As the gentlemen who asked me to speak to you said——"

He checked himself a second too late. The narrowing of Bennett's eyes and the vanishing

of the friendly light in the young man's face warned Newman he had made a fatal error.

"So you come to me as an emissary, not as a friend," said Bennett slowly. "And the 'gentlemen' you come from——"

"Are the men who represent all that can make or break your career—capital and political organization."

"In other words, Wainwright and Horrigan?"

"Yes. All they ask is that you remain neutral. That you——"

"That I look the other way while they rob the city?"

"I am an old man, Bennett," evaded the Judge, trying another tack, "and I've seen one rash step wreck many a bright career; just as this will wreck yours. Never antagonize wealth and the organization. The public for whom you sacrifice yourself will forget you in a month. Capital and politics never forget."

"I am not catering to the public. I am acting as my own conscience——"

"But this is stubbornness, not conscience. All you have to do is to remain neutral. If you do this, I am authorized to promise you—now, listen!—to promise you the nomination for Governor when your term as——"

"That's the bait, is it?" cried Alwyn an-

grily. "If I consent to betray my trust I'll get the Governorship. The bribe is golden and I don't wonder at Horrigan for offering it. The only thing that surprises me is that he should have chosen such a man as you for his lackey and go-between."

"'Lackey!' 'Bribe!' 'Go-between!'" echoed the Judge in real indignation. "How dare you, sir? This——"

"Isn't it a bribe?" insisted Alwyn; "and weren't you the man chosen to offer it? It will do you no good to bluster or grow indignant. In your heart you know the words I used were deserved. The Governorship offer was a bribe, pure and simple, and worthy the modern highwaymen who made it. But that you, a Judge —a former friend of my own blameless father —that you should come to me on such a vile errand turns me sick. Heaven help Justice and Right when our Judges can be controlled by a political boss and a roll of bills! That's all! I don't care to go further into the subject!"

Bennett walked away, leaving the little Judge to stare after him, pink with wrath, speechless with amazement. In all his sixty years no man had thus laid bare to Newman his own heart, stripped of its garments of respectability and self-deception. And, as usual

in such cases, now that the truth had been driven home to him, Newman wrathfully denounced it, even to himself.

Still flushed and incoherent, he wheeled to face a trio who were just returning from the supper-room. They were Dallas, Gibbs and Wainwright.

"Hello!" exclaimed Wainwright in surprise. "What's the matter with you, Judge? Are you ill?"

"If Mrs. Newman should come to know of this!" sputtered the Judge, glaring from one to the other. "She——"

"To know of what?" queried Gibbs. "What has happened?"

"Happened!" fumed Newman. "I have been insulted. Grossly, vulgarly insulted!"

"Insulted, Judge?" repeated Dallas. "By whom?"

"By Alwyn Bennett!" snapped the Judge. "Outrageously——"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Dallas. "There must me a mistake somewhere. Mr. Bennett is too well bred to insult any man, much less a man so much older than——"

"A gentleman, is he? I should not have believed it. He has insulted me most——"

"I'm not surprised," observed Wainwright.

"I am!" announced Dallas.

"Naturally!" sneered Wainwright. "If you can remain on speaking terms with him after his abominable treatment of me you can easily overlook any other brutality of his."

"Tell us about it, Judge," interposed Gibbs, seeking to avert any further clash between uncle and niece.

"I went to him," began Newman, "bearing a request from—from——"

The Judge paused. It was not wholly easy to present matters to this honest-eyed young girl in such a way as to bring her to his way of thinking. But Wainwright felt no difficulty. His shrewd brain caught at a means of turning the affair to account.

"You see, Dallas," the financier broke in with a warning glance to Newman, "I begged the Judge to intercede for me with Bennett, to ask him to bury the hatchet and let us be friends again for the sake of old times. I thought Judge Newman's age and his high office would compel a certain respect, even with a man of Bennett's character. But I was wrong, and I am sorry, Judge, for the unjust humiliation I caused you."

"I don't understand," said Dallas, looking in bewilderment from one to the other. "Judge, my uncle sent you to make overtures of peace? And Mr. Bennett refused to——"

"He not only refused, but called Mr. Wainwright a highwayman, and——"

"But why?" demanded Dallas.

"He pretended to misunderstand what I said about the conditions."

"Oh, it was a conditional offer, then? I thought——"

"Certainly there were conditions," cut in Wainwright, again coming to the emissary's rescue. "I asked that he take a position of neutrality in regard to this Borough bill. Simply neutral, mind you! Not to change his attitude in its favor, or——"

"That was a splendidly fair offer!" cried Gibbs enthusiastically.

"So it seemed to me," agreed Newman; "but Bennett would not listen when I tried to point out his proper line of duty. He called me a go-between and——"

"Even after you told him we were granting practically all the concessions he had asked in the bill?" queried Gibbs.

"Yes," said Newman. "He must have some motive behind it all. I can't——"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Dallas. "What ulterior motive could he have?"

"That is more than I know positively," returned the Judge mysteriously.

"But I do," declared Wainwright, pointing at Dallas. "There are the reasons!"

"I?" exclaimed Dallas, incredulously. "Explain, please!"

"Willingly," replied her uncle, "if you'll give me a fair hearing. Bennett is in love with you. He knows Gibbs also wishes to marry you. He knows, too, that Gibbs's fortune depends on the success of the Borough franchise. If the bill is beaten, Gibbs will be practically ruined and thus in no position to marry. We've known all along of this reason of Bennett's for fighting our bill, but Gibbs forbade me to tell you. He was afraid you might think he——"

"I don't believe one word of it!" cried Dallas, her big eyes ablaze. "Alwyn Bennett could not stoop to such a thing."

"No?" said Wainwright. "Then you probably will refuse to believe what I am about to tell you now. I considered Borough stock a safe investment and I put all your money and Perry's in it. Bennett knows this, and in spite of the knowledge he is trying to kill the franchise, even on the certainty of beggaring you and Perry along with Gibbs. If only he can ruin Gibbs he cares nothing about making you and Perry paupers, too. That is the sort of man you are defending against your own uncle. I have just learned besides that he has secretly,

through his brokers, sold large blocks of Borough stock short. Thus his veto, that ruins us, will make him a very rich man."

"It isn't true!" affirmed Dallas in dogged certainty. "Mr. Gibbs, do you confirm this story of my uncle's?"

"Please leave me out of this, Miss Wainwright," answered Gibbs gently. "I prefer to say nothing to prejudice you. When I fight I fight fair."

"Even at the cost of all your money," amended Wainwright. "Gibbs, this is carrying your sense of honor to an absurd point. And Bennett will——"

"Pardon me," broke in Alwyn, entering the foyer and going up to Dallas. "I'm a little late for our dance. I was detained by——"

"Alwyn!" exclaimed Dallas in relief. "I'm so glad you came here just when you did. Now we can clear this up in a word."

"Clear what up?" queried Bennett, glancing about in suspicion at the three silent men.

"You know Mr. Gibbs is favored in the Borough Street Railway affair," began Dallas. "He told you so at your office that day we were there. Well——"

"Yes; but don't let's discuss business tonight," replied Bennett. "This is our dance, and——"

"Wait, please! You knew his fortune was largely tied up in Borough stock. But here is something you didn't know. My uncle says my money and Perry's is all invested in that stock, and that if you defeat the bill we will be dependent on Mr. Wainwright's charity. If that is true, you didn't know it, did you?"

Her voice was almost tremulous in its eager, confident appeal. But Bennett forced himself to answer:

"Yes; it is true. And I knew it."

The eager glow died from her eyes, leaving a look of dawning horror.

"And knowing this—knowing Perry and I shall be made paupers by your action—you still insist on——"

"On opposing the bill? Yes. I am sorry, but it is my duty."

"Duty!" sneered Wainwright. "Your 'duty' was done when you vetoed the bill. That act made your position clear and showed the public how you regarded the measure. So why go on fighting it after——"

"I won't discuss this with you, Mr. Wainwright," interrupted Bennett. "We already understand one another, you and I!"

"My uncle says," pursued Dallas, "that you made your broker secretly sell Borough stock

short, knowing the deal would enrich you. Won't you even deny this?"

"No."

"You realize what all this foolish stubbornness must mean to me—to all of us," continued Dallas, "and you still persist in your opposition?"

"I must," said Bennett. "I can't turn back. Oh, Dallas," dropping his voice till none but she could hear, "can't you trust me? Only till Friday? I'll come to you on Saturday morning and tell you the whole miserable story. I only ask you to wait until then. Please——"

"I see no need of waiting for an explanation," retorted Dallas aloud. "I understand everything."

"But you don't understand!" insisted Alwyn. "I——"

"I understand only too well," repeated Dallas. Checking his reply and ignoring the anguished appeal in his eyes, she turned to Gibbs.

"I have kept you waiting long for your answer, Mr. Gibbs," she said, speaking in a level, firm, emotionless voice. "I am prepared to give it to you now—publicly. You have often asked me if I would be your wife. My reply is—yes."

"Dallas!" gasped Bennett in horrified surprise.

CHAPTER XII.

A MIDNIGHT VISITOR.

ALWYN BENNETT sat in his own study at home, in the big Bennett house, that remained as almost the last landmark of that solid, middle-nineteenth-century wealth and fashion which had once dominated a neighborhood now given over to office buildings and apartment-houses.

The hour was late. An hour and more had passed since the young Mayor and his mother had returned from the Administration Ball. The house was silent, and even the usually busy streets outside were wrapped in the hush that never falls until after midnight and is dispersed by the gray of dawn. Late as it was, Alwyn had made no move to discard his evening clothes. Alone he sat, his head resting between his crossed arms on the desk before him.

Motionless, inert, hopeless, he had remained there ever since his arrival from the ball. But if his body was powerless his brain was awhirl.

Try as he would he could see no light in the tangle of events into which his own sense of right had plunged him. He saw the future stretching out before him dreary and barren as a rainy sea.

Through all of his months of battling, he had ever struggled forward through increasing difficulties toward one bright goal—Dallas's love. And now that love was snatched from his grasp, through no fault of his own, and bestowed on a man unworthy to kiss the hem of her garment.

At each step in the long climb, Alwyn had asked himself, "Would she approve?" And now, through trying to be worthy that approval, he had forever lost it. For Dallas, he knew, had not only rejected him and engaged herself to Gibbs, but had done so with the belief that Bennett was a heartless, unscrupulous intriguer, undeserving a good woman's regard.

A rap at the door aroused Bennett from his bitter thoughts. He lifted his head wearily and gave word to enter. A drowsy servant came in with a card.

"He says it's important business, sir," said the footman; "and he wishes to see you at once if possible."

"Show him up," answered Bennett, dropping his voice so as not to disturb his mother,

who slept on the same floor. "I will see him here."

A minute later Horrigan's bulky form blocked the threshold.

"Queer time of night for a call," he observed casually, as he entered uninvited, closed the door behind him and took a chair. "But my business wouldn't wait."

"Then state it as briefly as you can," directed Bennett, making no move to rise or welcome his unbidden guest. "It is very late and I am tired."

"I've come to see you about our Borough bill."

"So I supposed."

"You won't call off your fight against us?"

"That question is hardly worth answering. No!"

"I thought not. Well, Mr. Alwyn Bennett, I've got you! I've got you! Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly. Is that all?"

"No, it ain't all," mimicked the Boss. "And I'm in earnest. I've got you where I want you."

"That doesn't interest me. If you've nothing else to say——"

"But I have!" chuckled Horrigan. "When

it came to a show-down between us two, I put a staff of men to looking up your record."

"You found nothing you could use. Is that——"

"No, it isn't even the beginning. Then I remembered about your father."

"About my father?"

It grated on Bennett that his dead father's honored name should be spoken by this low politician. But before he could protest more forcibly, Horrigan went on:

"What d'you think if I said your father was a grafter—one of the worst of his time?"

"I'd say you lied," answered Bennett calmly, "and I'd drive the foul lie down your throat with my fist. You'll have to think of some better scheme than that."

"Do you think I'd be idiot enough to come here with the story if I didn't have full proof of it?" asked Horrigan in contempt.

And, despite himself, Alwyn saw the man was speaking what he believed to be the truth. He paused in his impulsive forward move, reseated himself and asked coldly:

"What so-called 'proofs' have you been fooled by your heelers into thinking——"

"Don't believe me, hey? Well, you will fast enough before I'm done, unless you're afraid of what I've got to say."

"I'm not afraid of anything you can say. The highest tribute to my father's memory is the fact that a cur like you cannot defile it. Go on! I'll listen to you."

"Very good," said Horrigan, quite unmoved. "I'll make it as short as I can. I remembered your father got rich pretty quick. He was a member of the organization and his firm got the jobs of building the aqueduct and the new library. That gave me my cue. I looked up the specifications for both jobs, and I turned them over to the old engineering firm of Morris & Cherrington. You know the firm, perhaps. If you don't you can look them up. They don't belong to the organization; they're the best experts in their line, and they can't be juggled with."

"I know them. Go on!"

"I paid them a fancy sum to go over those specifications and then examine the library and the aqueduct and see if they were up to the mark, or if the city'd been cheated by the Bennett Contracting Company. I had a strong idea I was right, but I wouldn't speak till I had the proof. When I got home after the ball to-night I found the Morris & Cherrington report waiting for me. I brought a copy of it along with me."

"Well," asked Bennett indifferently, "what then?"

"Here's the copy of the report. Look it over for yourself. The crookedest job ever pulled off in this city. Third-rate material, when the material called for in the specifications was used at all. Granite shell filled with mortar instead of solid granite; foundations barely half the depth called for; inferior tiles in place of fire-proof ones; cheap, crumbly iron and steel instead of first quality—oh, there's fifty such substitutions and frauds! It's the rawest, bummest job I ever heard of. If any of the organization tried it nowadays the men who did it would be wearing stripes in a week. Graft, hey? Why, your father was the boss grafter of the century. The star graft-getter of the bunch. He——"

"Hush! For God's sake, hush!" panted Alwyn. "My mother sleeps only a few rooms beyond. I——"

"What do I care?" roared Horrigan in triumph. "Let everybody hear! The whole world is going to hear it unless that Borough Franchise bill goes through. Beat that bill and every paper in the country will have that report to publish. Stop your fight against us and the report is burned. That goes! See? Now, do as you please about the bill. You're

a fine man to preach about graft, you are! The very roof over your head—the clothes on your back, were bought with graft money!"

Bennett scarcely heeded the coarse insult. Nor did he note Horrigan's grunt of good-by and the clumping of his departing feet on the stairs. The young man sat, lost, hopeless, horror-gripped, his eyes running mechanically over the closely typewritten pages of the engineer's report. Outsider as he was in matters of practical business, Alwyn could see that Horrigan had in no way exaggerated the document's contents. He knew, too, that the firm of engineers who had drawn up the report were the foremost of their sort and above all shadow of suspicion.

Little by little the numbness lifted from his brain, and in its place crept a horrible conviction of the truth. His father—the gallant young soldier who had won a nation's applause in the Civil War—the man who, poor and unaided, had built up a fortune against keenest competition and had earned a repute for sterling probity which had ever been the delight and model of his son—this was the man whom a low blackguard like Horrigan now had the right to revile; a man apparently no better than the Boss himself—than any dishonest heeler in the organization!

And—as if it were not enough that the idol of a lifetime were hurled, crushed and defiled, from its bright pedestal—the family name must next be dragged through the mire of political filth and ill-repute and the dead man's memory forever blasted. Either that or his son must withdraw from the gallant fight he was waging against civic corruption. For, that Horrigan would carry out his threat and blazon the story and proofs of the elder Bennett's shame, Alwyn had no doubt. With all his faults the Boss was a man of his word.

"Stop your fight against us," Horrigan had said, "and the report is burned."

Yes, the Boss was a man of his word. Even Bennett admitted that. He would fulfil his promise in either event.

Listlessly, Alwyn began to review the case. On the one side a perhaps Quixotic fight for an abstract principle, a fight whose reward was political death, loss of the woman he adored, family shame that might crush his fragile old mother to the very grave. On the other, wealth, honor, love, the Governorship, a future happy and glorious.

Was he not a fool to hesitate? Had he not salved his conscience sufficiently by vetoing the Borough Franchise bill? Had he the right

to bring this new shame upon his mother's gray head? Where lay his highest duty?

The soft rustling of silk and a hand laid in light caress upon his head aroused the miserable man from his reflections.

Bennett looked up to see his mother standing beside him. She had thrown on a wrapper and, in slippered feet, had stolen noiselessly into the study.

"I was awakened by voices," she explained. "I thought I heard some one talking excitedly in here. Is anything the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing, dear," he answered gently, drawing the little old lady affectionately down to a seat on his knee, and smiling manfully into her sleep-flushed face. "Nothing is the matter. Only a business call."

"A business call at two o'clock in the morning!" she exclaimed. "Dear boy, you are working too hard. Your father never brought his business worries and work home. He always left them at the office. Can't you do the same? You'll wear yourself out."

"My father——" began Bennett; but the name choked him.

"You are growing to be so much like him," went on Mrs. Bennett fondly. "And it makes me so happy that you are. Your splendid fight against that infamous Borough bill, for in-

stance—how proud he would have been of that! It is just the sort of thing he himself would have done in your place. He was surrounded with wicked and dishonest men, just as you are. But through it all he remained true, honorable, incorruptible. What a grand heritage for any son! He—Alwyn!" she broke off alarmed, "why do you look at me that way? I never saw such a look in your eyes before. Are you ill? Has something happened that you are keeping from me?"

"No, no," evaded Bennett. "I only——"

"You had a caller here before I came in," pursued the mother, refusing to abandon the clue to which her womanly intuition had led her. "He brought you bad news? Tell me, dear! I'm your mother and I love you!"

"You are making my course more difficult for me by asking such questions, mother," he answered wretchedly; "and I——"

"I only want to help you, Alwyn. I can't bear to see you miserable. A woman's wit and a mother's love are often a combination that can solve problems beyond even the wisest man's powers of logic. Let me help you."

"I was trying to make up my mind," vaguely replied Bennett, sorely distressed by her pleading, "whether a man ought to follow his conscience, even if it leads to heartbreak for

those he loves, or whether he ought to let conscience go by the board for once and protect the happiness of his loved ones."

"Alwyn! How can you hesitate a second over such a question? One must do right, no matter what the consequence."

"I don't know about that," he said moodily.

"You know it perfectly well. It is what your father would have advised and—— But, Alwyn, you surely are not making yourself unhappy over a mere supposititious case?"

"Well," he continued, "let us take a 'mere supposititious case' if you like. Suppose, for instance, that a man, holding a position of trust, had had a father whose memory he honored and revered as I do my own father's——"

"Yes?" prompted Mrs. Bennett, as he paused.

"Suppose some one tempts him to betray his position of trust—even as I have lately been tempted—and threatens, in case of his refusal, to make public certain facts which would prove his dead father to have been a scoundrel. Now, what should the man do? Should he let his father's sacred memory be trampled in the mud, let his duty go by default and save——"

"It would be an awful responsibility to decide such a question," said Mrs. Bennett with

a little shudder; "but there could be only one reply."

"And that is?"

"He must remain faithful to his duty, be the results what they may."

"You really think so?"

"There can be no doubt. Right is right, and——"

"It shall be as you say!" groaned Alwyn.

"What?" queried Mrs. Bennett, startled at the despair in his voice. "Do you mean it is an actual case? Some friend of yours, perhaps?"

Bennett nodded.

"Oh, the poor, poor fellow!" she sympathized. "What a terrible position for him! It was he, perhaps, that I heard talking to you in here just now? No wonder he seemed excited. 'The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children, even unto the——' "

"It is sometimes less hard on the children than on the wives," mused Bennett, half to himself.

"The wives? Your friend has a mother living? That makes it doubly tragic. How I wish I might help her! Oh, my son, every day I thank God in all humility that my husband lived so blameless a life and left so honored

a name! How grateful you and I both ought to be for——"

"It is easy enough to decide for some one you have never seen," retorted Bennett, almost rudely; "but suppose the dishonest man in my story had been father, and——"

"I refuse to suppose anything of the sort!" interrupted his mother indignantly, rising to her feet. "I wonder that you can speak so! How can you suggest so horrible a thing?"

"Just a thoughtless, tactless speech of mine, that's all," lied Alwyn. "It's very late. You'll have a headache, I'm afraid. Won't you go to bed?"

"Yes; it is late. And I'm keeping you up. Good-night, dear. I wish your friend——"

She checked herself suddenly with a little gasp. Bennett, glancing up to learn the reason, saw her eyes were riveted on a bit of pasteboard lying on the corner of his desk directly beneath the reading lamp.

It was Horrigan's card.

Slowly the mother's gaze shifted from the card to her son. From her face the color had been crushed by some swift emotion that left it very old, pale and sunken.

"Mr. Horrigan!" she murmured. "It was he who was your visitor to-night? Surely he

isn't the sort of man to care about his father's reputation for honesty. He——"

"You're tired, mother," interrupted Bennett in haste. "Won't you——"

"Wait!" she panted. "His visit here—Alwyn!" her voice rising to a wail of panic-stricken appeal, "did—did that man dare to hint anything against your father? Tell me the truth! I have a right to know. Did he?"

Alwyn bowed his head in silence.

"Tell me what he said."

It was no appeal now, but the outraged love of a wife that demanded satisfaction.

"He said," muttered Bennett, almost incoherently—"he said my father made his fortune —by—graft!"

"And you thrashed him and threw him out of the house?" she cried, her old eyes ablaze.

"No."

"Alwyn!"

"He—he proved what he said!"

"It is a lie! A wicked, abominable lie!"

"It is the truth, mother. Would I have told you such a thing—would Horrigan have left this room alive—if it were not true?"

A silence—dreadful in its intensity—fell over the room. Alwyn dared not look at his mother. At last she spoke:

"I must know more; I refuse to believe one word. You spoke of proofs. What are they?"

Without a word, Bennett handed her the engineer's report. And again tense silence brooded over the study, broken only by the occasional turning of a page of the report. Then, after what seemed to Alwyn an eternity of waiting, the document slid to the floor. Bennett glanced at his mother. She was standing rigid, her face cold and hard as granite.

"Horrigan has ferreted this out," he said, not daring to draw nearer to proffer comfort to the woman whom the Boss's disclosure had turned to stone. "He has secured the proofs and says he will publish them broadcast unless I withdraw my opposition in the Borough franchise matter. If I let that bill pass, Friday, he will burn the report and——"

"There is only one thing to do," interposed the mother, speaking with slow decision, her voice as cold and colorless as her face. "Right must prevail, no matter what——"

"Mother!" cried Alwyn, quickly rising, "you advise me to—you advise me——"

"I do not advise—I command! Do right!"

CHAPTER XIII.

"IN THE DAY OF BATTLE."

THE momentous Friday had arrived, the day whereon the famous—or infamous—Borough Street Railway bill in its amended form was to come up for the Aldermen's consideration.

Every paper in the city devoted columns to the situation. Everywhere it was known that the "boy Mayor" was fighting with all his might the bill he had already vetoed. Equally well was it understood that Horrigan was making the battle of his whole career in behalf of the measure. If he could but induce his "solid thirteen" Aldermen to stand firm and could maintain his hold on Roberts for the fourteenth, all would be plain sailing, and the bill would pass by a two-thirds vote, in spite of the Mayor's veto.

More than the mere bill and his price for it were included in Horrigan's reasons for his present activity. He recognized that his pres-

tige as Boss was at stake. That in case of failure his hold on the organization would be considerably weakened; perhaps almost so much shaken as to permit Phelan to fulfil his once absurd threat to tear him down from his eminence. For the whole organization was viewing with breathless interest the duel between Horrigan and the youthful Mayor the Boss had "made." In such circles a beaten man commands scant respect.

* * * * * *

The Board of Aldermen were in session in the City Hall. Off the antechamber of the great room where they met was a small, snugly furnished apartment, first of a series of similar rooms that stretched away, with connecting doors, to the far end of the main corridor. This place, with the room adjoining, had once been the Comptroller's office. Of late, however, that official had changed his quarters, and the room nearest the antechamber had been appropriated by Horrigan himself as a sort of unofficial snuggery, where he could sit at ease and transact business at close quarters whenever the organization's secret interests demanded his presence at the City Hall.

Here, his whereabouts known only to his intimates and personal lieutenants, the Boss was wont to sit at ease, like some fat, rubicund

spider in the center of a web of intrigue, and issue his orders or plans of campaign. Some of these were carried by word of mouth through the anteroom into the Aldermanic Chamber. Others he transmitted by means of a telephone that stood ready on the center table, before which his great easy chair was always placed.

Around this table, as the Board of Aldermen were about to convene on the fateful Friday of the Borough bill's final consideration, sat three men—Wainwright, Gibbs and Horrigan. The former, in spite of his habitual steady coolness, was plainly uneasy. Gibbs made no effort to deny his anxiety. His eyes were bloodshot, his manner abstracted, and his nerves evidently strung to breaking point. Horrigan alone of the trio had abated not one jot of the colossal calm and brutal power that were part and parcel of the man's mighty character.

"When will our bill come up, do you suppose?" asked Gibbs, breaking a brief silence.

"In half an hour or so, probably," answered Horrigan, glancing at his watch. "I thought it was better for us to get here ahead of time."

"Half an hour!" fumed Gibbs; "and neither Ellis nor Roberts here yet! Suppose they don't get here on time?"

"They will!" grunted Horrigan placidly.

"Do you think it is possible either of them has come yet?" went on Gibbs, with a glance at the antechamber door.

"No."

"How do you know? Perhaps——"

"Williams would have told me. He knows where I'm to be found."

"You're sure Ellis and Roberts will show up?"

"Yes."

"How soon?"

"In good time."

"But suppose they don't?" insisted Gibbs nervously. "What then?"

"Why, if they don't, then they won't. What do you suppose?" snapped Horrigan. "What's the matter with you, anyhow? Are you looking for a museum job as the Human Question Mark?"

"Gibbs is naturally nervous," explained Wainwright. "He's not so old at this game as you and I, Horrigan, and we must make allowances."

"Nervous!" grunted the Boss. "I should say he is! Just look at that cigar I gave him. He's been chewing it as if it was a sausage. That's no way to treat a fifty-cent cigar, man! Here, try another, and see if you can't smoke

They seem to be waiting for the Borough bill to——"

"If they raise any row, rush a motion through to clear the galleries," ordered Horrigan.

"Nothing short of the police could clear away that big crowd."

"Then we'll have the police in to help."

"But," argued Williams, "that would mean a riot and a lot of people would get hurt. All the newspapers to-morrow would——"

"Never mind that. Go ahead and do as you're told. At the first sign of disapproval from the galleries have the motion passed and turn the police loose. Understand?"

"All right," acquiesced Williams dubiously, and withdrew.

Wainwright opened his mouth to protest, but Horrigan was already busy at the telephone.

"Hello!" he called—"I want 900 F—900 F. Yes—yes. Is that the captain?" he went on, a moment later. "Then send him to the 'phone. Tell him Mr. Horrigan—— Hello, captain," after another short pause. "Yes, it's Horrigan. At City Hall. In the Aldermanic Chamber there's a mob and we're likely to need the police to quiet 'em. Yes. No, not 'diet' them, you fool! 'Quiet' them. Yes. Send us a squad at

double-quick, and let the sergeant report to Williams. Let the boys bring their night-sticks, and tell 'em they're to take no back talk and not to be afraid to slug, if it comes to that—and I guess it will. Pick out the right sort to send. Yes. Of course I'll back up anything they do. Sure! Rush 'em. Good-by!"

"But——" began Wainwright as Horrigan hung up the receiver. The Boss cut him short:

"I'll let that gallery crowd see it ain't safe to interfere with my work."

"But," protested Wainwright, "surely it will not be necessary to——"

"To break heads? It probably will. Why not?"

"I'd rather use diplomatic tactics."

"Diplomacy's a game I never took the trouble to learn."

"But those people you're about to antagonize control votes——"

"Yes, the people may control the votes, but we count them. See the difference?"

"But doesn't the law permit the public to attend these meetings?"

"Only so long as they behave themselves. If a few of 'em get clubbed they won't be so ready next time to butt in where they aren't wanted. They——"

The tinkle of the telephone bell cut short the Boss's public-spirited remarks. Horrigan unslung the receiver.

"Hello!" he hailed. "Who's—— Oh, Roberts, eh?"

"Is it Roberts?" cried Gibbs excitedly.

"No," snarled Horrigan in ponderous sarcasm. "It's the Czar of Russia telephoning to borrow a nickel. I called him 'Roberts' just to flatter him. Go on, Roberts! What's that? Yes, this is Mr. Horrigan. Want to see me, do you? What for? No, there isn't," he went on angrily, after a moment's listening. "You and I settled all that. Come and do your share of the—— Yes, I tell you it's up to you to make good."

Another pause, during which Gibbs and Wainwright glanced at each other in suspense. Then the Boss continued, in a louder voice, over the wire:

"Well, come to my room in the City Hall, then, if you've got to see me. But there's no need for it. It's all settled and there's nothing more to be said. I'll be here. Don't keep me waiting. I—— What's that? No! I won't come to you! You'll come to me, and you'll come on the double-quick! Jump now! If you don't—— No—that's all. Hurry up!"

"Wouldn't it be wiser," suggested Gibbs, "to humor the man by going to him, as he suggests? Then——"

"No, it wouldn't!" retorted Horrigan as he kept the telephone. "If I'd gone on the principle of 'humoring' folks, I'd still be working at eighteen per, selling ferry tickets. Take my tip, friend: Never go to a man. Make him come to you. That's business. And it gives you a 90 per cent. better chance with him. Now then," pulling a paper from his pocket, "I told you about the report I had Morris & Cherrington dig out, showing up Bennett's old man. Here it is. Like to look it over while we're waiting?"

"Little enough good it seems to have done!" returned Wainwright as the three heads bent over the document. "He's still fighting us, tooth and nail."

"Yes," agreed Horrigan grimly; "but it's a satisfaction to know it isn't only us he's fighting. He's cutting his own throat, too."

CHAPTER XIV.

LOVE AND POLITICS.

THE first committee room that lay to the right of Horrigan's office (in the same relation to it as the antechamber to the left) was usually given over to dry offical business, and its musty walls must almost have experienced a distinct shock about this time as Dallas Wainwright entered from the corridor behind. She was accompanied by Perry and by Phelan, who, passing through the corridor toward the Aldermanic Chamber, had collided with the brother and sister at the committee-room door.

"Here's a good sight for sore eyes, Miss Wainwright," the Alderman was saying with his best air. "But is it fair to ask what brings such a bunch of sunshine into an old political shell like this? I'd as soon think of seeing Horrigan at mass as to find you here."

"I want to attend the Aldermen's meeting," exclaimed Dallas. "I have a special reason. So I made Perry bring me. But at the door

they told us the gallery was so crowded that we couldn't——"

"Never you mind the gallery, miss," interrupted Phelan. "It isn't meant for the likes of you, anyway. You just sit here a few minutes and I'll catch an attendant somewhere and make him hustle up a couple of good chairs for you on the main floor, where you can pipe everything just like you were in your own op'ra box coppin' off a swad of high C's."

"Thank you so much, Alderman," replied Dallas. "I hope we're not putting you to too much trouble?"

"No trouble at all. And even if it was I'd come a-runnin' to meet it. I'm the original trouble-eater. Besides, the best in the house is none too good for the lady who was so int'rested in my outings. So long! I'll be right back."

"What a queer chap he is!" mused Perry, as Phelan hastened away on his mission. "If I could take a six-weeks' course in slang and hot air from that man I'd be able to sew buttons on the whole English language."

"I don't think you need very much tuition," observed Dallas. "But it was kind of Mr. Phelan to look after us. I like him be——"

"Because he's standing by Bennett so pluckily in this fight?"

"Mr. Bennett is nothing to me."

"No?" asked Perry in innocent amaze. "Then I wasted a lot of good cigarette money cabling to you about his campaign when you were across the Big Wash last summer. For a man who was 'nothing' to you you sure took large swads of intelligent interest. Look here, little girl," he went on less flippantly, "what's the matter? Has anything——"

"No!" she broke in with a miserable effort at courage; "nothing's the matter. I'm perfectly happy. Why shouldn't I be? An engaged girl is always——"

"An engaged girl!" he shouted in high glee. "You don't mean to say you and Alwyn——"

"Of course not! I am engaged to Mr. Gibbs."

"Good Lord!" gasped the lad in honest dismay. "If that's meant for a joke it's the punkest ever! Did——"

"It isn't a joke, Perry, and it's very rude of you to talk so. I am engaged to Mr. Gibbs, and——"

"But—how—when did the atrocity come off, and——"

"I became engaged to him the night of the Administration Ball. I didn't want to tell you yet, because I knew you don't like him. I'm —I'm——"

"You're happy?"

"Certainly I am!" she retorted defiantly. "So happy that I——"

"That you are having a fight to keep from crying this blessed minute!" he finished. "Say, Dallas, it breaks me all up to have you so miserable. I think a whole lot of you. More'n of any one else but Cynthia. And I want to help you out of this measly mix-up. Won't you——"

"There is nothing any one can do," she murmured sadly. "I have chosen my course, and I——"

"Cheese it!" whispered Perry in hurried admonition. "Here comes Bennett, and Phelan's with him."

The young Mayor came in, talking to the Alderman as he came.

"This room's disengaged," he was saying. "I'll write it here and give it to—— Oh, I beg your pardon," he broke off, recognizing Dallas and Perry. "I didn't know——"

"I've got two good seats for you," announced Phelan. "Right where you can see and hear the whole shootin'-match. An' I guess before the meetin's over it's liable to get as int'restin' as a double Uncle Tom show in a tent. I'll show you the way as soon as you're

ready. There's no rush. Things ain't begun to sizzle up yet."

Bennett had crossed to where Dallas stood irresolute, and under cover of Phelan's talk with Perry, said to her with a certain unconscious stiffness:

"I fear I was too taken aback by your announcement the other evening to remember to congratulate you. But please believe me when I say I wish you every happiness in the new life you have chosen."

"Thank you very much," faltered Dallas.

There was an awkward pause. Then she said:

"You came in here to write something. I'm afraid we are detaining you. You must be busy with your fight against the Borough bill. You are quite determined to continue it to the end?"

"To the bitter end!" he answered miserably; "even though that end can hold nothing but bitterness for me."

The set anguish in his face moved Dallas more than she dared confess even to herself.

"I am sorry," she said softly.

"It is the course I have chosen," he answered with a shrug, "and if it leads to eternal darkness, instead of the sunlight I expected, I must follow it none the less."

"That is sheer obstinacy," she cried, battling against her own heart's passionate plea. "You have laid out a plan to ruin Mr. Gibbs, to deprive Perry and me of my own fortune, to enrich yourself by selling Borough stock short and then vetoing the bill so that the stock would collapse. You have done all this—and yet you talk of following your abominable course to the end!"

"Dallas," he said very quietly, "you don't understand and you have refused to trust me to explain. So I can say no more. But one day you may learn the cruel mistake you are making."

"Mistake?"

"I don't mean that you are mistaken in choosing Gibbs instead of me, but that you are wrong in your judgment of what I am doing. I hope you will understand some day. It will be too late to change anything then, but at least I shall be set right in your eyes. And that means more to me than you can ever know. Good-by."

He left the room abruptly, and Dallas stared after him, her brain awhirl with conflicting thoughts.

"There's a man in ten million, miss," volunteered Phelan, breaking in on her reverie; "and from the looks of that brand-new dinky three-k

spark on your finger I guess you're wise to the fact."

"I am engaged to Mr. Gibbs," replied Dallas coldly.

"What the——" gasped Phelan, checking himself just in time; "I'm sure sorry for you, miss," he went on with a sincerity that precluded any offense. "For friend Gibbs is going to have something so heavy fall on his bank-roll by the time we're through with this Borough bill that he'll be able to use his wad for a book-mark without crinklin' any of the leaves. Why, he'll——"

"Come, Perry," interrupted Dallas; "shall we go to the meeting now?"

Confused, she turned to the door leading into Horrigan's room instead of that opening on the corridor, and found herself face to face with her uncle, the Boss, and Gibbs.

"I beg your pardon," she began, surprised. "I didn't know——"

"Dallas!" exclaimed Gibbs and Wainwright in the same breath. Horrigan scowled at the interruption, as all three men rose to their feet.

"What brings you to a place like this?" asked Wainwright in displeasure.

"Perry and I," indicating her brother, who

had followed her into the room, "are going to attend the meeting of the Board of Aldermen."

"But," protested her uncle disapprovingly, "it is hardly the sort of——"

"My fortune and Perry's and that of the man I am to marry are all bound up in the Borough bill," she answered fearlessly. "I have a right to be present when that bill's fate is decided."

"Good nerve!" applauded Horrigan. "You're a thoroughbred. If there were more women like you——"

"Mr. Horrigan," reported Williams, hurrying in from an antechamber, "the police have come, and——"

"All right," answered the Boss. "Give the sergeant his orders."

"I—I hardly like the responsibility," muttered Williams; "and——"

"But you'll take it. I'm backing you. By the way, get seats for Miss Wainwright and her brother. Get them close to the anteroom door, so if there's a row she can come back here. If there are no vacant seats there, clear a couple of people out and make place for——"

"But we have seats," protested Dallas, as Williams sped on his errand. "Alderman Phelan——"

"Alderman Phelan will have trouble finding

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a seat in this city when I'm done with him!" snarled Horrigan. "Better take the seats I offer, Miss Wainwright. They're safer."

"But," protested Wainwright, "if there's to be any danger she mustn't be there. I can't have——"

"I will be on hand to help her, if there is," Gibbs answered him.

"H'm!" grunted Horrigan in somewhat uncomplimentary doubt.

"I will, too!" spoke up Perry.

Horrigan nodded approval.

"You'll be all right, then," said he; "and now——"

"You spoke of the police being in the Aldermanic Chamber," said Dallas. "What for?"

"To check any trouble the gallery may make," answered Horrigan. "This man Bennett's stirred the people up with a lot of his anarchistic reform ideas till they're crazy. Some one's liable to get a broken skull, and then Bennett will have himself to thank. Maybe when the police have hammered a little sense into folks' heads with their nightsticks the victims will begin to understand just what sort of a man Alwyn Bennett is. Remember, now, Gibbs, and you, too, young Wainwright, if there's any sign of a row bring Miss Wainwright back here at once."

"All right," agreed Perry, a little rueful at the prospect of missing a free fight. "Let's go in there now. I've never been to an Aldermen's meeting before; but I ran up against a car strike riot once, so I guess I'm on to most of the subtle rules of elegance that govern such shows. Come on, people, if you're coming."

"Your niece is a thoroughbred," repeated Horrigan, with rare approbation, as the anteroom door closed behind Dallas and her two escorts. "So she's to marry Gibbs, is she? I'm sorry for them both."

"Why?" asked Wainwright sharply.

"Because it won't take her a year to find out that he's a yellow cur. And when she does she'll either kick him out or lead him around on a chain. Now the fellow a girl of that sort ought to have married is Bennett. He's an obstinate fool, but he's a man. I thought you said once he was stuck on her."

"He was—he still is."

"And she took Gibbs instead?" cried Horrigan, a world of incredulity in his rough voice. "Women are a queer lot! Why'd she shake Bennett, if it is a fair question?"

"I let her see Gibbs was a heroic martyr," said Wainwright with quiet significance, "and that Bennett was——"

"Oh, I see!" chuckled Horrigan. "Still there might be something made out of Bennett's love for her even yet."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm not quite sure. I'll have to think it over."

"Roberts has come!" exclaimed Williams, entering from the corridor; "he's asking for you. Shall I bring him in here?"

"Yes," replied Horrigan. "By the way," he added to Wainwright as Williams departed, "I'll have to ask you to clear out for a few minutes. I've got to see Roberts alone. Now for the tussle that'll decide the whole fight!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE BATTLE OF WILLS.

WILLIAMS entered with Roberts in tow. The latter wore a haggard, troubled look, and his natural nervousness had visibly deepened. So much so that he had not even noted Phelan's appearance in the corridor as he passed into Horrigan's private room.

"Good-evening, Alderman," said Horrigan civilly.

"Good-evening, sir," answered Roberts, palpably ill at ease.

"I understand there's a full meeting to-day. Even Ellis came back from the South to be here. You're the only man missing."

"I couldn't get here sooner. I——"

"I see. That's all, Williams. You needn't wait. Roberts and I want a little talk before he goes in. Now, then," went on the Boss with a complete change of manner, as Williams left the room, "what's the matter with you?"

"I—I can't——"

"Can't what? Speak out, man! Don't stand there and mumble at me!"

"I can't vote for the Borough Franchise bill."

"Can't, hey?" roared Horrigan. "Why not?"

"Because—because——" faltered Roberts. Then, with a rush of hysterical emotion that blotted out his fear, he cried:

"Have you heard what that man Bennett has done? He organized a voters' committee in my ward and sent them to ask me, at my own house, what I was going to do about that bill. They had been stirred up by Bennett till they looked on me as a crook and on the bill as a personal robbery. They told me if I voted for it they'd know I was a dirty thief and grafter and that they'd kick me out of the ward."

"Well, well!" rumbled Horrigan soothingly, as though trying to calm a fractious drunkard. "What do you care? When they've forgotten all about the bill, you'll still have the dough, won't you? Folks won't ask 'How'd he get it?' All they'll care to know is 'Has he got it?' "

"That isn't all!" Roberts blundered on, scarcely heeding the interruption. "Bennett's next step was to organize a committee of voters' wives, and they came to see my wife this morning when I was out and told her they'd

heard I was going to sell myself and vote for a dishonest bill. My wife—my wife thinks I'm the squarest, noblest man on earth. Oh, you needn't sneer! Her trust means everything to me. She told the women I wouldn't stoop to any deed that wasn't honest, and they answered: 'Our husbands believe Mr. Roberts is a crook. If he is really honest he'll vote against that bill as he did before.' Then, on my way home this noon, I met my little boy. He was crying. I asked him what the matter was. He said some boys had told him I was a grafter. I tell you," his voice rising almost to a scream, "Bennett's made my life a hell. I'm no crook. I'm honest, and——"

"Sure you're honest!" Horrigan exclaimed, as though to a cross child. "Honest as the day. That's why you're voting for our bill. Because the crooked clauses have been cut out of it, and in its present form it's a benefit to the city."

"That isn't why I promised to vote for it," contradicted Roberts with a despairing flash of courage. "It was because I—because——"

"Never mind why, then; but just go ahead and do it."

"I won't! I dare not——"

"You'll do it, I say!" stormed Horrigan. "You can't welch on me at this stage of the

game. Those Sturtevant Trust Company notes of yours were sent to you and——"

"And I won't take them!" declared Roberts, slamming two slips of paper down upon the table. "There! take them back!"

"What do I want of them?" argued Horrigan craftily. "They belong to you."

"They don't. I won't keep them."

"You'll have to. I keep you to your promise."

"What promise?" asked a voice behind them.

Bennett, hastily summoned by Phelan, had entered the room unobserved by either of the excited men.

"What promise?" he asked again. "A promise to——"

"What are you doing here?" bellowed Horrigan in fury. "You called me down once for coming into your private office without knocking. What do you mean by coming into mine?"

"Yours?" queried Alwyn. "I had an idea it was the city's. The time is past when the words 'Horrigan' and 'city' meant the same thing. Well, Roberts, how are you going to vote? I want to believe you honest, and—— Why, what's all this?" his eyes falling on the forgotten notes on the table.

"Nothing of yours!" shouted Horrigan,

making a futile, furious grab for the documents which Alwyn was picking up. "Drop them! Drop them, I say, or you'll——"

"Why should I?" asked Bennett calmly, his quick eye taking in the nature of the slips of paper, even as his alert brain grasped in full the meaning of the transaction in which they figured. "Do they belong to you?"

"They don't belong to you, anyway," retorted Horrigan, "and if you dare read them——"

"I've already read them. Roberts," he added in a kinder voice, turning to the shaking Alderman, "these were to have been your bribe, weren't they, for voting for the Borough bill?"

His quietly compelling tone and glance forced from Roberts a frightened "Yes," before Horrigan could intervene.

"I thought so. Be quiet, Horrigan!" he commanded, as the infuriated Boss sought to speak through his choking wrath. "This is between Roberts and I. Now, then——"

"I returned the notes to him!" pleaded Roberts in panic. "Honestly, I did! Just before you came in. I could have kept them, and he couldn't have prevented me, even if I voted against the bill. But I'm square and——"

"You are square!" affirmed Bennett, gripping the Alderman's cold, moist hand in friend-

ly reassurance. "I knew all along you were honest at heart. Horrigan wanted to bribe you and you wouldn't be bribed. Now I want you to go into the Council room and vote as your manhood tells you to."

Roberts, comforted, yet still trembling, obeyed, not venturing a second look at Horrigan.

"Now, my friend," said Bennett pleasantly, when he and the Boss were alone together, "what are you going to do about it? It seems to me your game is up."

"I want those notes!" panted Horrigan, finding coherent speech with an effort through his red mist of rage.

"Why? They're not yours. They aren't made over to you, and there is no cancellation stamp on them. They are the property of the Sturtevant Trust Company and I'll send them back there to-morrow—after I've had them photographed."

"You'll give them to me!" shouted Horrigan, his mighty body vibrating with fury, "or you'll never leave this room alive!"

"You are a fool, Horrigan!" remarked Bennett with condescending calm; "for you don't even know the right man to bully."

He gazed unflinchingly into the maddened little eyes of the Boss, and so for a moment

they stood—Patrician and Proletariat—in the world-old struggle of the two for supremacy.

Horrigan's face was scarlet, distorted, murderous; Bennett's pale, cold, deadly in its repose.

And then waged the battle of wills; both men standing motionless, tense, vibrant with dynamic force.

Slowly, little by little, Horrigan's eyes dropped. He moved awkwardly to one side from his position in front of the door. And Bennett, without so much as a backward look, passed out.

The Boss, like a man in a daze, sank heavily into a chair and gazed straight ahead of him, his usually red face gray and pasty.

But he was not to enjoy even the scant boon of solitude. From the anteroom Gibbs strolled in.

"They're going over some unimportant preliminary business," remarked the broker, "so I came out for a breath of fresh air. How are things going?"

"We're beat!" grunted Horrigan, not looking up.

"Beat?" screamed Gibbs, ashen and inert at the news. "You don't mean it! You can't mean it! Great Heaven!"

The sight of the other's cowardly emotion seemed to rouse Horrigan from his apathy.

"If I can stand it, you can!" he snarled. "You only lose your percentage on the deal, while I——"

"A percentage!" echoed Gibbs, too panic-stricken to heed his own indiscretion. "Every cent I had in the world! I——"

He checked himself an instant too late.

"So?" drawled Horrigan, his keen little eyes searing the other with boundless contempt. "So it was you who was secretly buying up the stock and tailing in on to our game, hey?"

"I'm ruined! Broke! And——"

"And you've got it coming to you, you whining traitor! The man who goes back on his partners deserves all the kicking he gets."

"I—I didn't mean any harm!" mumbled the crushed Gibbs. "It couldn't hurt you people to have me buy Borough stock for myself, and I'd have cleared up a million and more. Oh, don't glower like that, Horrigan, but try to think out some way of——"

"Of what, you cur?"

"Isn't there any way, even now, to make Bennett let up on his fight?"

"If there was you couldn't be of use to us. So why should I talk about it to you?"

"But I'd do anything in the world—anything——"

"You would?" cut in Horrigan sharply.

"Yes! yes! Only give me a chance. I'd——"

Horrigan considered; then said reflectively:

"No chance is too slight to take at a time like this, and nobody's too rotten to be of use. I've found there are three things, one of which will always buy any man: A woman, ambition or cash. We've tried Bennett on ambition. He doesn't need money. So only the first of the three remains."

"A woman? I don't understand."

"Miss Wainwright."

"But——"

"Listen here: Bennett's in love with Wainwright's niece. You've cut him out. Go and tell him if he'll let our bill alone you'll smash the engagement and leave her free to marry him. See?"

"I can't! I—hold on, though! Afterward I could deny the whole thing, couldn't I? It'd be his word against mine, and she'd never believe I could do such a thing. I—I might try!"

"Yes," growled Horrigan, "you might. A cur that's lost all his nerve can try things that even an ordinary crook would balk at."

But Gibbs did not hear. He had returned to the corridor in search of Bennett. The man

scarcely deserved the opprobrium heaped on him by Horrigan. A brilliant, daring operator, he was, unknown to himself, a rank coward at heart. For the first time in his life the cowardice had cropped out, and to do Gibbs justice, it had driven him temporarily insane. In his normal senses he would never have stooped to the plan he was now so eager to carry out. It was a putrid bit of jetsam at which a financially drowning man did not scruple to clutch.

Horrigan followed him from the room, his own splendid nerve quite recovered from the crushing blow his hopes had received. He had staked heavily on the deal. Moreover, its failure, as he knew, meant the wreck of the mighty political prestige he had so long and wearisomely built up. It might even, if Alwyn fulfilled his threat about the notes, lead to graver personal consequences. Yet the bulldog pluck that had carried this man of iron from the gutter to the summit of political power, did not desert him; nor did he show the loss of one iota of his own customary monumental calm.

Scarcely had Horrigan quitted the room when Perry and Dallas entered it.

"You could cut the atmosphere in there with a cheese knife," Perry was saying. "Williams doesn't think the Borough bill will come up for half an hour or so. We'd better spend the

time till then in here than to stay there and turn our lungs into a microbe zoo."

Dallas did not answer. She sat down by the table and rested her head dejectedly on one little gloved hand. The sight of Bennett—his grave, hopeless appeal to her—the calm, utter despair of his brave face—all these had affected her deeply. Perry noticed with brotherly concern her look and attitude.

"Feeling faint?" he asked.

"No; I'm all right, thanks."

"You look pretty near as blue as Alwyn. He——"

"Don't let's talk of him, please," she begged.

"Why not? He's the whitest chap this side of Whiteville."

"That's what I used to think. But I know better now."

"Then, miss," broke in a voice from the doorway, "you're entitled to another 'know.' "

Phelan, who, passing down the corridor, had heard her last words as he reached the threshold, turned into the room.

"Excuse me for buttin' in on a fam'ly chat," he remarked, coming forward; "but I'm pretty well posted on His Honor's character, and when I hear any one knocking him, it's me to the bat. What have you got against Mr. Bennett? 'None of your measly business,' says

you. 'Quite so,' says I; an', that bein' the case, let's hear all about it."

Something that underlay the seeming impertinence of the Alderman's bluff speech touched Dallas. On impulse she spoke :

"Mr. Bennett," said she, "is opposing the Borough bill, knowing we shall be paupers if he defeats it. He also sold Borough stock short before he announced his veto. What can one think of a man who enriches himself at the expense of his friends?"

"Gee!" cried Perry; "that's a terrible thing! Bennett's the original Man Higher Up, I'm afraid. I wonder he isn't afraid to wear the clothes of such a wicked geezer as himself!"

"Oh, Perry! Don't joke about it," begged Dallas. "Can't you see the serious side of anything? We shall be penniless and dependent on——"

"Fear thou not, sister mine!" declaimed Perry in his best melodramatic manner. "Paupers, sayest thou? Far be it so! Little Brother Perry will guard thee from the cold, shivery swats of a wintry world. Maybe we can sell violets or start a fight club or——"

"Don't!" she urged, jarred by his flippancy. "You don't understand. I——"

"As for that story of His Honor's sellin' stock short and makin' a pile of cash on his own

veto," put in Phelan, genuinely worried, "Horrigan's looked it up and got enough facts to make him think he can prove it. He's goin' to make Williams tell the whole story to the Aldermen to-night. It's a lie, of course, but it'll hurt His Honor a lot. And the worst of it is Bennett refuses to deny it."

"He does, eh?" remarked Perry. "Then I'll do some talking about it. I'll have to fracture a promise I made Alwyn, but I guess it's worth while."

"What do you mean?" queried Dallas in wonder.

"I mean Bennett lent me the money to sell enough stock short to make up for what you and I would lose if the bill was quashed. And he gave me a letter to his own broker. We carried it through and now you and I stand pat to win whichever way the cat jumps. We're on velvet, thanks to Alwyn."

"He did this for us?" gasped Dallas in amaze. "But why didn't you tell me? Why did you let me misjudge him?"

"He made me promise not to let you know a thing about it. And——"

"Say, youngster!" broke in Phelan, tingling with excitement, "you come chasin' along with me into the Aldermen's meetin'. I'll have you get up there an' tell what you know. It'll

knock that lie of Williams's and Horrigan's so high it'll forget to hit ground again. Come on, son! There's sure liable to be hot doin's in this meetin' in about eleven seconds. Come along!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EAVESDROPPER.

DALLAS, left alone in Horrigan's private room, sat at the big table, making no effort to follow her brother and Phelan. A messenger, searching for Horrigan, bustled in, looked inquiringly at the motionless, white-faced girl, then passed on to the committee room beyond, and on again in his search, until the sound of his footsteps died. And still Dallas sat, inert, dumb.

Little by little she was piecing together the facts of the long, miserable complication, in the light of what Perry had just told her. It was absurdly easy now that she held the key of the situation. She could understand everything: how Wainwright had put her fortune into Borough stock to influence Bennett; how, failing to move the latter, he had used Alwyn's knowledge of the fact as a weapon against the young man; how Bennett had sought to save her fortune and why he had forbidden Perry

to bias her feelings by telling of the generous act.

"From first to last," she murmured in unhappy contrition, "he has acted honorably and as he thought I would have wanted him to, and for my happiness. And I—like the wretched little fool I was—couldn't understand and publicly humiliated him. Oh, if only it wasn't too late to——"

A vision of Gibbs flashed before her mind, and she shuddered, realizing all that her rash steps had entailed.

"It is too late!" she confessed to herself, fighting back the hot tears that seared her eyes. "But at least I can tell him I know, and beg his forgiveness and thank him."

The sound of voices in the corridor roused her from her bitter reverie. She sprang up hastily, unwilling that any one should see her tear-stained face. But the speakers, though they drew near, did not enter Horrigan's office. Instead, they stepped into the adjoining committee room. The messenger had left ajar the door between the two rooms. Realizing this and not wishing to be seen, Dallas shrank back toward the wall, fearful of detection. Then the voices of one of the speakers suddenly arrested her notice.

"Well," Bennett was saying in no especially

civil tones, "you said you wished to speak to me in private. What have you to say? Be brief, for I am busy."

Finding herself the unwilling witness to what promised to be a confidential talk, Dallas stole toward the door leading to the corridor. But Horrigan, as was his custom, had locked it on going out. She dared not enter alone the crowded anteroom in her present state; so, hesitatingly, she paused, forced to remain where she was. The sound of another voice chained her to the spot, and, unconscious of eavesdropping, she stood spellbound, hearing every word distinctly through the half-open doorway.

"I—I hardly know how to begin," Gibbs was replying to Bennett's curt demand. "It is a delicate subject, and——"

"Then the sooner it is treated to open air the better. Is——"

"You've won the Borough bill fight," began Gibbs.

"Is that all you have to say to me?"

"No. You've won. But you've lost far more. You've lost Dallas Wainwright."

"I hardly need to be reminded of that," retorted Bennett; "and it is a subject I don't care to discuss."

"But, listen!" pleaded Gibbs, as the Mayor

BENNETT REFUSES GIBBS' OFFER.—Page 210.

made a move as though to leave the room. "One minute! I say you've won the Borough fight. I've won Dallas. Can't we——"

"Well, what?" asked Bennett, with ominous quiet, as he paused in his departure.

"Can't we—strike some sort of bargain?" said Gibbs tentatively.

"Explain, please," ordered Bennett, with that same deceptive calm.

"Why," went on Gibbs, emboldened at the other's seeming complacence, "suppose you give up this Borough fight and I give up Dallas? I won her by a trick. She doesn't really love me. It is her pride, not her heart, that made her throw you over and accept me. It is you she loves, and I've known it all along. And you are in love with her."

"What then?"

"Just this," returned Gibbs, wondering at Bennett's quiet reception of the strange offer: "She will marry me because she isn't the sort of girl to go back on a promise, especially since she looks on me as a sort of high-minded martyr to your oppression. So if I hold her to her word she will not back down. Now, if you, even now, withdraw your opposition, the Borough bill will go through. Let it go through and I will break my engagement to Dallas Wainwright and leave her free to marry you."

"You promise that?"

"Yes," cried Gibbs elated. "I promise on my word of honor. Is it a bargain?"

"Gibbs," replied Alwyn slowly, "I didn't think there was so foul a cur as you in all the world! I thought I understood how utterly rotten you were, but I didn't believe there was a man living who could debase himself as you've just done."

"But——" began Gibbs in bewilderment.

"Now, you'll listen to me for a moment," cut in Bennett, silencing the interruption. "You say I'm in love with Miss Wainwright. It is true. I love her in a way a dog like you could never understand if he tried for a lifetime. I'd give my life for one word of love from her. But I'd sooner go forever without that word than to win it by a dishonest deed that would prove me unworthy of her. I asked her love as a free gift, and tried to deserve it. She refused. And I won't try to buy what she won't give me. Especially since the price would make me as unworthy of her as you yourself are."

"But you take the wrong view of it. You see, if——"

"I see this much: I'll have to speak plainer to get my view of the case into your vile mind. If ever again you meet me, stand out of my

way. Don't speak to me or come where I am; for if you ever cross my path again I'll treat you ten thousand times worse than when I thrashed you in that football game. That's all."

Bennett, restraining his wrath with a mighty effort, turned on his heel and strode off into the corridor, leaving Gibbs staring after him in dumb, impotent despair.

When the broker had recovered himself sufficiently to start from the room, Dallas Wainwright stood before him, barring his exit. Her face was dead-white; her big dark eyes ablaze.

"Wait!" she commanded. "I must speak to you—for the last time!"

"Dallas!" gasped the desperate man, his drawn face turning positively yellow. "You were—you—you heard?"

"Mr. Bennett just now called you 'the foulest cur in all the world,' " said Dallas, her voice scarcely louder than a whisper, yet every syllable stinging as a whip-lash. "He put it too mildly."

"But, sweetheart——"

" 'Miss Wainwright,' please! I heard you offer to sell me to him in exchange for his conscience. If my own brother had told me such a thing I would not have believed him. But

I, myself, heard it. And I heard his splendid answer."

"But you know I was joking! That it was just a trick to——"

"Just such a trick that made me promise to be your wife? Yes. But this time you had to do with a man—a man in a million. Not with a poor credulous little idiot like me. And he answered you as I should have answered you had my eyes been opened in time. I——"

"Dallas!" groaned Gibbs, "for Heaven's sake don't look at me like that. I can't bear it. I love you! And I——"

"And I, in my criminal folly, promised to marry you!" she stormed. "I let you kiss me! My lips are degraded forever by that touch of yours. I let you speak words of love to me. I broke a brave man's heart for your worthless sake. Oh, the shame—the horrible shame of it all! But I shall thank God on my bended knees that I have found out the truth before it was too late!"

"Too late?" he echoed in horror, his voice rising almost to a scream. "Dallas! You're not going to throw me over? You aren't——"

"Scott Gibbs," she answered quietly, a world of wondering scorn in her level tones, "you do not even know how vile a thing you are!

Now leave me, please. Your presence sickens me!"

He tried to speak, but something of the ineffable contempt in her steady eyes silenced him. Without a word he slunk out of the room and out of her life.

Phelan, agog with eagerness for the coming struggle in the Aldermanic Chamber, bustled past through the corridor. The Alderman had many duties to-day; and as the performance of each brought him nearer to his longed-for revenge on Horrigan, he was positively beaming with righteous bliss. Dallas caught sight of him.

"Alderman!" she called faintly.

Phelan halted, still in haste to fulfil his mission.

"Could—could I see Mr. Bennett?" she asked, a new timidity transforming her rich voice. "Do you know where I can find him?"

"Is it important? He's pretty busy."

"Very important!" she pleaded. "I must see him at once."

"I'll look him up," agreed Phelan; "but I warn you he's too busy to see you just yet. S'pose you let me take you back to the meetin'? Our bill's comin' up in a few minutes now, an' you don't want to miss it. Then I'll scare up His Honor for you as soon as he's got a spare

minute and bring you back here to him. Sorry to keep you waitin'," he went on, as they started toward the Council chamber; "but before this session's over, all sorts of things is due to explode—an' we ain't hardly at the beginnin' of the excitement yet. We're goin' to make a Fourth of July celebration in a giant powder fact'ry look like a deaf-mute fun'ral by the time we're done!"

CHAPTER XVII.

VENGEANCE!

"For Time at last makes all things even;
And if we do but wait the hour
There never yet was human power
That could evade, if unforgiven,
The patient search and vigil long
Of him who treasures up a wrong."

"HE's in there!" observed Phelan in high excitement, jerking his thumb toward a door leading off the committee room; "an' I've sent for Wainwright an' Horrigan to meet Your Honor here. An' I've fixed it so the Borough bill won't come up for ten minutes. Now, all that's left is to touch the punk to the fuse an' set off the whole giddy bunch of fireworks under 'em. Gee! but it's good to 'a' stuck to this old world just for the sake of bein' here today an' seein' what I'm due to see!"

The Alderman chuckled, but his joyous anticipation found no reflection in Bennett's white, set face. The two were in the committee

room, whither Phelan had repaired after depositing Dallas in a chair beside her brother at the meeting, and attending to one or two details of greater import.

"Yes," went on Phelan, again nodding mysteriously toward the further door. "He's in there, trained to the minute for the blow-out. There's some one else wants to see you, too. Some one who'll make more of a hit with you, if I'm not overplayin' my hand. But good news can wait. There's so little of it in this measly life that it gen'rally has to. I——"

From the corridor Horrigan stamped into the committee room, Wainwright at his heels.

"Well?" cried the Boss defiantly, glaring at Bennett and ignoring Phelan. "You sent for us. What do you want?"

"One moment!" intervened Wainwright. "We are beaten. We admit that without argument. So we need waste no time going over details."

"Have you sent for us to say what you'll sell out for?" queried Horrigan coarsely. "Because, if you have, you've only to name your price. You've got us where you want us. We've got to pay."

"I should have thought," replied Bennett, with no shade of offense, "you would know by this time that I have no price."

HORRIGAN AND WAINWRIGHT BROUGHT TO BAY BY BENNETT.—Page 218.

"Then what do you want?"

"Nothing—from you."

"Why did you send word you wanted to see us?" growled Horrigan impatiently, as he and Wainwright, uninvited, seated themselves at the table.

"To tell you," answered Alwyn, glancing from one to the other, "that every step you two have taken in this whole infamous transaction, from the very first, has been carefully followed, and, to use your own phrase, we've got you with the goods!"

"Same old bluff!" commented Horrigan contemptuously, with a reassuring wink at the somewhat less confident Wainwright.

"By to-morrow noon," resumed Bennett, "you will both be indicted on a charge of bribery. Even now there are detectives on the watch for you. Escape is impossible."

"Rot!" sneered Horrigan. "You've no evidence that will indict, and you know it. Even if you had, don't I control most of the Judges and the District-Attorney's office besides? Swell chance you'll have of getting a conviction past that bunch! Bah! You talk like a man made of mud. I s'pose it's the affair of those Roberts notes you're counting on. That don't feaze me any. My lawyer can twist that around so it'll look like a charity gift. No, no,

youngster! You'll have to think of something better if——"

"And, anyhow," put in Wainwright nervously, "you can't prove any connection on my part. There's nothing against me or——"

"I think there is!" retorted Bennett, wheeling about on the financier. "And even if I can't nail the Roberts bribery to you I've plenty more counts to hold you on."

"All these generalities and vague accusations prove nothing, Bennett," answered Wainwright, drawing courage from Horrigan's colossal calm, and speaking with more assurance. "Mr. Horrigan and I are not schoolboys to be scared by baseless threats. This is all guesswork on your part. Come, now! Name one specific charge you can prove!"

"One will be enough to convince you?" asked Alwyn. "Well, then, how about this as a first guess? Mr. Horrigan's bribe of $2,000,000 in money and 25,000 shares of Borough stock, for agreeing to put through the Borough franchise? For 'guesswork,' that doesn't seem to me very bad."

Wainwright's hard mask of a face twitched convulsively, but the steady brain that had carried him unshaken through a thousand risky financial deals came at once to his rescue.

"An excellent guess!" he agreed in splendidly feigned amusement. "But unfortunately the courts demand proof before convicting a man. And there is no proof whatever of——"

"Are you sure?" queried Bennett. Turning to Phelan he added:

"Please ask Mr. Thompson to come in."

The Alderman, with an expansive grin, flung open the door of the further room.

At sound of his secretary's name, Wainwright had sprung to his feet, and, dumfounded, was leaning heavily on the table, staring across the threshold of the suddenly opened door.

There, framed in the dark doorway, his face deathly pale, his eyes glowing with a strange light as of murder, stood Cynthia's brother.

His presence in the City Hall was no mere chance, but the climax of a series of conferences between Bennett, Phelan and himself, dating from the night of the Administration Ball, when, despite his own resolve, the secretary's hand has been forced by the inquisitive Alderman and his identity revealed.

Bennett had been let into the secret next day, and the trio had had a three-hour talk from which Phelan had emerged with the gleeful air of one who has unexpectedly found a thou-

sand dollar bill. Thompson, too, had left that conference with a look of calm, intense satisfaction that transfigured him.

Other conversations had followed; one of them in the presence of notary, stenographer and lawyers. The trap at last was ready to be sprung.

The financier, for the first time in his nine-year close association with the secretary, met the younger man's gaze without seeing the latter droop in deferential submission. Now he received back look for look from his former abject slave; and it was his own glance that wavered before that concentrated glare of hate.

"Thompson!" he cried; and his voice bore a world of incredulous reproach.

Before him stood the one man on earth in whom Wainwright had ever placed implicit trust; to whom he had confided his gravest business secrets; the man whom he had so shrewdly tested in countless ways and who had proven stanchly incorruptible and loyal. And now, Thompson apparently confronted him in the rôle of traitor—of exultant spy.

"Thompson!" he exclaimed once more, almost with a groan, as the secretary advanced into the room until only the width of the table separated employer and employee.

Then the newcomer spoke for the first time

in an oddly muffled voice, as though fighting desperately for self-restraint.

"No!" he contradicted. "'Thompson' no longer. Henceforth I am Garrison!"

Wainwright's face grew gray. Breathless, unbelieving, he peered across at the pallid features of his new foe, tracing in them the likeness to the old friend whose ruin and death he had caused. The haunting resemblance that had often vaguely occurred to him when watching Thompson at work now returned in double force. But now, as in a flash, it was explained, and he knew that his secretary spoke the truth.

"Yes," went on Thompson in that same choked, struggling intonation, "I am Harry Garrison. You wrecked my father's life. You drove him to suicide. You blasted his memory. You beggared his children. I am his son—Harry Garrison. Now do you begin to understand?"

"You see, Mr. Wainwright," intervened Bennett, as the secretary's pent-up rage strangled the words in his throat, "my guesswork has a fairly reliable backing."

But Wainwright did not hear. He still stared, as one hypnotized, into the blazing eyes of the man he had trusted.

"You've—you've played me false!" he managed to gasp at length. "You have——"

"Sure he has!" cut in Horrigan. "What'd I tell you last summer, Wainwright? I said then you were foolish to trust him so. I said he'd stand watching. The minute I set eyes on that lantern-jawed, glum face of his——"

"Played me false!" muttered Wainwright again, dazed and doubting the evidence of his own senses.

"Played you false?" jeered Thompson. "Played you false? Why else did I become your servant? What else have I been waiting all these horrible years for? I've sat at your desk and listened to your orders, never venturing to say my soul was my own. Now you'll listen to me!"

"Why do you bother with the little traitor, Wainwright?" scoffed Horrigan.

But the financier was standing motionless, leaning on the table, his fingers spasmodically gripping its edge till the knuckles grew white. Ridiculously like a cowed prisoner before the bar of justice, he faced his fiery-eyed young judge.

"They sent for me," went on Thompson, brokenly, jerkily, scarce intelligible as the suppressed hatred of a decade battled for expression. "They sent for me. My father had killed himself. My mother lay dead—struck down by grief. Our honored old name was

defiled. My sister was a pauper. Who had done all this? You! Oh, they hushed it up; but I found out! I found out! And by my murdered father's body I knelt and swore I'd pay you for it. I'd pay you if it cost me my life. I would ruin you in name and fortune, as you ruined my father. And then I'd kill you, as you killed him. I'd——"

With an effort that left him haggard and trembling, Thompson forced himself to calmer speech and continued:

"I answered your advertisement for a secretary. I had no experience. Yet out of ninety applicants you chose me. That was fate. I knew then that one day I should have you at my feet, as now I have. Fate fought for me. I made myself necessary for you. I obeyed your hardest orders. I found out ways to please you. I fetched and carried for you. I ran to anticipate your slightest wish as though I was your adoring son. It was 'I hope you're satisfied, sir,' and 'Let me do that for you, sir,' and 'I am glad to work over-time for you, sir, any time you wish,' while every minute I had to fight hard to keep from striking you dead!"

"I must go!" groaned Wainwright, shudderingly. "I can't stand this. I——"

"Oh, I made you think me a paragon!" resumed the youth. "You took to testing my

honesty and loyalty in clever ways that you thought I'd never discover. I stood the tests. Then you trusted me. You fool! As if the fact that I wasn't a crook proved I wasn't your enemy! You could see no further than dollars and cents! When I didn't steal those or sell the market tips you gave me you thought I was incorruptible and devoted to your interests. And all the time I——"

"You were listening at the keyhole that day last summer?" broke in Horrigan. "The time I pulled the office door open, and——"

"Then and always," answered Thompson; "and," he added, his eyes returning to Wainwright's, "I copied every confidential telegram or letter you sent. I took down in shorthand every private interview of yours. I tracked the checks that completed your deals, and when they came back from the vaults as vouchers I stole them. I've got proofs, I tell you—proofs—of every crooked transaction you have dabbled in for nine years. I've secured proofs of every step in this Borough franchise bribery, and I've turned them all over to the Mayor here. That evidence will send you to State's prison! To State's prison, I tell you. To a cell, with cropped hair and striped suit. I'll send you to prison, where you'll break your heart and be branded forever as a convict. And

THOMPSON GIVES TESTIMONY WHICH CONVICTS HORRIGAN AND WAINWRIGHT.—Page 225.

when your term is up I'll be waiting for you, and I'll kill you! Do you hear me, you foul criminal!" he shouted, screaming hysterically and foaming at the mouth in his abandonment of insane fury. "I'm going to kill you! To kill you!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE REWARD.

UNDER the maniac fury that blazed from Thompson's eyes, Wainwright shrank back in panic dread.

"He's—he's mad!" cried the financier. "Don't let him at me!"

For Thompson seemed about to hurl himself at his foe.

"Go easy, son!" adjured Phelan, laying a restraining hand on the secretary's shoulder.

The latter, recalled to himself by the pressure, relaxed his tense, menacing attitude and, with hysterical revulsion of feeling, sank into a chair, burying his face in his arms on the table before him.

"Nine horrible years!" he sobbed brokenly; "nine awful years of slavery, of debasement! Watching—hating—longing—to crush him; and, oh, the time has come, thank God! Thank God!"

"You're all in, lad!" muttered Phelan, pass-

ing an arm about the shaking youth and lifting him to his feet. "Come with me. I'll send out and get you a bracer."

Thompson, exhausted by his emotions, obeyed mechanically; but at the further door paused for a moment and again fixed his wild, bloodshot eyes on Wainwright's haggard face.

"Remember!" he threatened, his voice dead and expressionless. "When you get out of jail I'll be waiting for you! And as sure as God's justice lives I'll kill you as I'd kill a dog! Nine years' waiting and—I'll murder you as you murdered my——"

Phelan had forced him over the threshold, and the slamming of the door behind the two seemed to break the strange spell that had fallen on all.

Wainwright straightened himself, glancing fearfully about, tried to regain his shaken composure and opened his mouth to speak. But the hurried entrance of Williams prevented him.

"Mr. Horrigan!" gasped the excited newcomer, "I've been looking everywhere for you."

"What's wrong now?" snapped the Boss. "Has——"

"The Borough bill's come up at last, and——"

"The gallery crowd's rough-housing the place? Then——"

"No; they're as quiet as death. Too quiet. And they have long ropes, and they're stringing them over the——"

"Call in the police, then!" ordered Horrigan. "Now's the time for them."

"I don't dare," protested Williams. "Those men in the gallery are desperate. They're dangerous. If——"

"The police?" interrupted Bennett sharply. "What are you talking about?"

"My orders!" returned Horrigan. "I sent for them. Tell them to——"

"Don't do it!" commanded Bennett in anger.

"Do as I say, Williams!" countermanded Horrigan. "Have them in and——"

"Phelan," interposed Bennett, as the Alderman, having left Thompson in other hands, came into the room, "go to the sergeant in charge of the police Mr. Horrigan sent for. Tell him I say he must keep his men where they are and take no orders except from me. Understand?"

"I sure do!" grinned Phelan, with a delighted grin at the wrathful Horrigan; "and I'll see they——"

"You need not trouble," croaked Wain-

wright, his throat dry and constricted with fear. "The bill is withdrawn!"

"That goes!" corroborated Horrigan. "Do you hear that, Williams? Mr. Wainwright withdraws the Borough bill. Attend to it in a rush, man. Never mind about the police."

"Well, friend Horrigan," blandly observed Phelan, as Williams hastened out, "I told you I'd cross two sticks of dynamite under you some day. Likewise I done it."

"What had you to——"

"To do with smashin' you? Only that I put His Honor on to the bill in the first place an' then sicked him on to Roberts, an' discovered Thompson an' turned him over to Mr. Bennett! That's about all. But I guess it's enough to make your p'litical career feel like it had a long line of carriages drivin' slow behind it, Chesty Dick, my old chum!"

Horrigan had turned his back on his victorious tormentor and was facing the Mayor.

"Bennett," said he, "you forget I've still got that report about your father and——"

"To-morrow's papers will publish it," supplemented Alwyn.

"No, they won't!" contradicted Horrigan. "That would be bad politics. The report will hold over till——"

"You're mistaken!" interrupted Bennett

calmly. "I've sent a copy of that report to every paper in the city and have accompanied it with a statement that I shall make good to the city treasury every penny overcharged in the library and aqueduct contracts. So——"

Horrigan was staring at him open-mouthed.

"Bennett," he muttered in genuine wonderment, "I don't know whether you're the craziest fool or the cleverest politician in the State!"

"Your Honor," humbly pleaded Wainwright, who for several minutes had been trying in vain to draw Bennett aside for a private word, "I am an old man. Is there no way of —of showing me mercy in my——"

"Yes!" retorted Alwyn. "You shall receive exactly the same mercy you have always shown to your own financial enemies. No more, no less."

"Oh, cut out the whine, Wainwright!" sneered Horrigan in high contempt, as he linked his arm in the broken financier's and hauled him roughly from the room. "What's happened to your nerve? You're almost as bad as Gibbs! You're still rich, and as long as you've got plenty of cash no law in America need ever bother you. There's lots of talk about indictments, and arrests, and investigations and prosecutions, and all that sort of

rot. But I don't see any millionaires going to jail! Come on across to my lawyer's."

The Boss and financier departed without a backward look, leaving Phelan and Bennett alone on the late scene of battle.

"Say, Your Honor," observed the Alderman slyly, "there's one very important engagement you've clean forgot. Sit right where you are a minute and I'll send the party in here and see that nobody butts in on you till you want 'em to. Oh, but we didn't do a thing to Horrigan! He'll have to watch which way his toes point to see whether he's goin' or comin'."

The Alderman sped on his mission, leaving Alwyn seated alone, dejected, miserable, in the deserted committee room.

Now that the crisis was past, his heart was strangely heavy. He had won. But at what cost? At the loss of all he held dear.

Alwyn Bennett knew, too, that the real fight was but just begun—a fight that had waged since the world began and must last to Judgment Day—the hopeless, uphill battle of Decency against Evil; of Honesty against Graft.

Horrigan's sneering words, "I don't see any millionaires going to jail," stuck disagreeably in the young Mayor's memory. Their brutal,

bald truth jarred on his belief in the inevitable triumph of Good. After all, was the dreary, self-sacrificing battle against an unconquerable foe worth while? Could the great god Graft ever be checked in his mastery of the earth? If——

A rustle of skirts startled Alwyn from his dark thoughts.

"Dallas!" he cried, unbelieving, as he sprang to his feet, half dazed at the wondrous light that transformed her face.

Slowly she came toward him, her glorious dark eyes on his, her white hands outstretched in irresistible appeal. At last she spoke:

"I love you!" she said.

THE END.

RECONCILIATION OF BENNETT AND DALLAS.
"I LOVE YOU."—Page 232.

It is possible

that you are tired of hearing and reading about the Letters of this one and that one, but we desire to call your attention to the fact that

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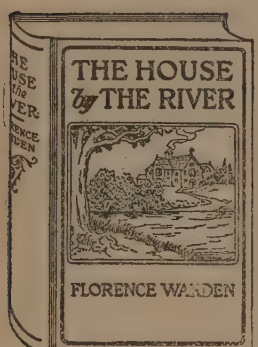

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